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ARISTOTLE'S *EUDEMIAN ETHICS*

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Political Science

by
Jeremy John Mhire
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the argument and character of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*. Its goal is to provide a critical analysis that will elucidate the treatise's themes in general and its arguments in particular. The first section is devoted to examining the relationship between happiness and the good life. The second section seeks to make clear the relationship between virtue and justice. The third section attempts to illustrate the nature of intellectual virtue. The fourth and final section analyzes the notions of friendship and philosophy.

TRANSLATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The standard translation that this thesis will use is that of H. Rackman, *Aristotle XX: The Athenian Constitution, The Eudemian Ethics, On Virtues and Vices*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). When necessary, it has been supplemented with H. Rackman, *Aristotle XIX: Nicomachean Ethics*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), or with Martin Ostwald, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, (New York: Library of the Liberal Arts, 1962). The author of this thesis has also reserved the right to alter or adapt quoted translations for reasons of clarity and exactness. All changes to in-text citations are noted with italics.

CHAPTER I: Introduction

In the beginning of his book *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre uses a thought experiment to describe what he sees as the current state of moral language and inquiry.¹ MacIntyre asks his audience to imagine a scenario where a series of natural disasters has occurred, all of which were blamed on the community of natural scientists by a fringe political movement. The result of this movement is a widespread indictment of science, accompanied by the removal of scientists and scientific teaching from the universities, and a ridiculing of the type of knowledge with which they were identified. MacIntyre then pushes the scenario one step farther, asking the audience to imagine that, over time, the fringe political movement itself falls from grace, and there is a push to reinstate the scientists and scientific learning into the universities. To the dismay of those who wish for this revival, however, little survives of the once storied scientific history, leaving the project of scientific revitalization with no context from which it can take its bearings. The result is linguistic and conceptual chaos, where those interested in the project can agree on nothing for lack of any contextual foundation.

For MacIntyre, this thought experiment serves to illustrate the predicament in which contemporary moral inquiry finds itself. And the predicament is all too peculiar, for our need to answer these questions is not diminished by our inability to do so: “Our capacity to use moral language, to be guided by moral reasoning, to define our transactions with others in moral terms is so central to our view of ourselves that even to envisage the possibility of our radical incapacity in these respects is to ask for a shift in our view of what we are and do which is going

¹Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 1.

to be difficult to achieve.”² The contemporary dilemma in which those interested in questions of morality find themselves is one that begs for a new starting point, one that can serve as a basis from which moral inquiry can proceed.

One such starting place for contemporary moral inquiry is in the very origins of the subject matter. Philosophical inquiry concerning basic questions of right and wrong, good and bad, find their genesis in ancient Greece, and as such, a proper starting place for moral inquiry must take into account, if not proceed from, these senescent investigations. In particular, the writings of Aristotle on the subject of ethics provide an excellent point of departure for any moral inquiry, both in terms of history and substance. It seems altogether plausible, if not necessary, that contemporary moral inquiry proceed by first attempting to understand what Aristotle himself thought about moral matters, and what those thoughts can mean to a contemporary mind.

How, then, does one go about accounting for Aristotle’s thought? Traditionally, those interested in Aristotle’s treatment of ethics concerned themselves primarily and almost exclusively with the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although the Aristotelian corpus lists three works devoted to the subject of ethics, including the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Magna Moralia*, it is widely held that the first of these is the quintessential statement of Aristotle’s thoughts on matters of an ethical nature. As the notable Aristotelian translator H Rackman attests, “In any case, no one questions that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is the authoritative statement of Aristotle’s system.”³ This view is also held by Martin Ostwald, who, when

²Ibid., p. 2

³H. Rackman, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), xvii.

speaking of the relationship between the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* in the introduction to his translation of the former, asserts, “Yet it is also true that wherever there are differences in the treatment of a given problem between the two works, the *Nicomachean Ethics* represents a more mature view than the *Eudemian*.”⁴

The translators of Aristotle’s ethical works are not alone in their preference for the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In his chapter on Aristotle in the *History of Political Philosophy*, Harry Jaffa describes the *Eudemian Ethics* as “An evidently earlier and less definitive work. . . .”⁵ Jaffa is echoed in his opinion by Carnes Lord, who, when writing the same chapter for the third edition of the *History of Political Philosophy*, suggests that “Two other treatises, the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Magna Moralia*, cover much of the same ground as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but are of lesser interest. . . .”⁶ The *Nicomachean Ethics*, then, is generally held to be *the* key to unlocking Aristotle’s thoughts on ethical matters, as it represents his fullest, most mature arguments and discussions.

This view, while being almost universally held, has recently received a good deal of scrutiny. In his book *The Aristotelian Ethics*, Anthony Kenny states that “Scholars have disagreed whether the *Eudemian Ethics* was the work of the immature Aristotle or of a posthumous admirer; but they have agreed that it was in various ways unworthy of the master in

⁴Martin Ostwald, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1962), xviii-xix.

⁵Harry Jaffa, “Aristotle,” *History of Political Philosophy*, 2nd edition, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1969), 64.

⁶Carnes Lord, “Aristotle,” *History of Political Philosophy*, 3rd edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 118.

his years of greatness: it was too unworldly, too pious, too formalistic, too incoherent, too chaotic, too systematic.”⁷ Kenny then proceeds to use a battery of historical, statistical, and linguistic comparisons to render the underlying presuppositions about the *Nicomachean*’s superiority over the other ethical treatises, especially the *Eudemian*, essentially unsubstantiated.⁸ The result of Kenny’s research is to call into question all of the assumptions that have traditionally been made about the ethical corpus, and to require a reexamination of Aristotle’s works on a largely substantive basis.

The contemporary reader, then, is faced with the challenge of having to account for all of Aristotle’s ethical works if he wishes to properly begin his moral inquiry from the ancient Greek perspective. And this is a daunting task, as it requires studying each text on its own terms, and then assessing the teachings of that text against both traditional scholarship and contemporary dilemmas. A single study of an Aristotelian ethical treatise would do well to begin with certain aspects of the texts, ones that will hopefully bring insight into Aristotle’s thought as a whole. It is the aim of this project, then, in light of this daunting challenge, to engage in a close and critical reading of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* while asking and attempting to answer three rather basic, yet fundamentally important, questions. First, does the *Eudemian Ethics* present a concise and coherent argument from which an understanding of Aristotle’s thoughts on ethics can be discerned? If the traditional scholarship on the *Eudemian Ethics* is correct, the text should not be able to hold up against the scrutiny of critical analysis and probing. As such, its

⁷Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 2.

⁸For a detailed critique of Kenny’s procedure and generalizations, cf. T. H. Irwin, “The Aristotelian Ethics; Aristotle’s Theory of Will,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 77, June, 1980.

reputation as a less-mature work would be confirmed through the deficiencies of its argument. If this turns out not to be the case, however, and the scholarship is shown to be incorrect, then the *Eudemian Ethics* should provide a clear and informative account of Aristotle's thought, particularly with respect to its subject matter. The second question, following closely from the first, asks what the main theme of the *Eudemian Ethics* is, and how the text develops an argument to elucidate that theme. A mature work can be expected to fully develop any and every aspect of a theme necessary to make clear what the teaching on that theme is. The third and final question that this project seeks to answer is how the argument of the *Eudemian Ethics* is influenced by two concepts that are seemingly crucial to any study of ancient Greek ethical thought, namely, politics and philosophy. By examining how this text deals with these two indispensable concepts, one may be better suited to understanding both the teaching of the treatise in particular, and Aristotle's thought more generally.

Thus, this examination seeks to answer only a few of the major questions for which a comprehensive study of Aristotle's ethical thought would have to account. It is only by starting from these basic arguments and themes that more general questions, such as the *Eudemian's* relationship to the *Nicomachean*, may eventually be answered. In this sense, then, the present examination will serve as both a worthwhile project in itself, as well a possible stepping stone to a larger, more comprehensive account of Aristotle's ethical thought. The subject of this project, the *Eudemian Ethics*, has been chosen over the two other texts because, on the one hand, unlike its better known cousin, it has been either largely ignored or unsympathetically examined by scholars whose interpretive assumptions stress its less mature nature. A comprehensive account of Aristotle's ethical thought must come to terms with the texts on their own terms, not through

the perspective of possibly prejudicial scholarship. On the other hand, the *Eudemian Ethics* was chosen instead of the *Magna Moralia* because the latter, as opposed to the former, survives only in fragments and is thus less accessible. The *Eudemian Ethics* provides this examination with the perfect subject matter with which it can begin to gauge Aristotle's thought, traditional scholarship, and even contemporary ethical dilemmas. It is to the beginning of this examination, then, that we must now turn.

CHAPTER II: Happiness and the Good Life

The first chapter of the *Eudemian Ethics* opens with a disagreement. The poet Theognis stood before the gods and suggested that goodness (V(V2' <), beauty (5V8' <), and pleasantness (Z* b) were all separate and distinct properties. Aristotle believes this suggestion to be mistaken (1214 a7). Goodness, beauty, and pleasantness are all properties of the same thing, and this thing is the best of all things possible for a human being. Happiness possesses goodness, beauty, and pleasantness as properties; happiness is the best of all things whatsoever. Happiness is also related to living or a way of life, as is suggested by moving from a description of happiness to ways of life, or more specifically, to opinions on the good life (1214 a15).¹ And these opinions must be examined, for it is through a clarification of these opinions that the good life may come to light, and its relationship to happiness may be established. The procedure for this examination is twofold: we must decide what the good life consists in, and how it is to be obtained. This procedure, then, deals with the activities of living, and its scope is immediately practical. It does not mean, however, that the examination will lack theoretical grounding. Aristotle assures us that matters of speculative philosophy (N48' F' NVV< 2goDOJ 46Z<) will be attended to as the situation may require (1214 a14).² This initial perspective makes clear that an examination of the good life must proceed through the lens of activity, a lens that must be kept in mind at all

¹What the translator renders as the good life (J' gb . Z<) literally means to live well, to live most well, or to live happily. The literal meaning should be kept in mind at all times, as it connotes a sense of activity that is not necessarily conveyed in the translator's rendition.

²Carnes Lord, in his essay on Aristotle in the *History of Political Philosophy*, references this part of the *Eudemian Ethics*, suggesting that it implies an audience of 'political' men instead of theoretical ones. Whether or not this is the case must be evaluated in light of the discussion as a whole. Cf. Carnes Lord, "Aristotle," *History of Political Philosophy*, 3rd edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 120-121.

times if the perspective is to be understood properly. The true nature of happiness must be discerned from the opinions about the good life, opinions that must be properly examined. We, as the readers, have been prepared for a dialectical discussion of sorts, one that Aristotle himself will guide through the direction of his treatise.

The examination of the good life begins with the way one acquires and acts in relation to happiness (1214 a17). Aristotle brings the still ambiguous relationship between happiness and the good life that introduced the chapter back to the forefront of the discussion, reemphasizing their interconnectedness without necessarily equating the two. As something to be acquired, happiness can be thought of as an end, since it must be brought about by other means. It is commonly thought (or opined) that happiness is acquired through one (or a combination) of five ways; by nature, study, training/habit, divine inspiration, or fortune (1214 a26). In each of these opinions, according to Aristotle, there is an element of truth, but the real question is what manner singularly, or what combination, is most important for acquiring happiness (1214 a28). The existence of five separate modes of acquisition demonstrates that there is no universal consensus about how happiness is acquired. Nor is it clear that happiness is something that can even be brought about through activity, as Aristotle initially suggested by relating it to living well.³

Aristotle is content to lay this question aside for the moment, choosing instead to shift the focus to living well. By shifting to this particular issue, happiness's contingency on conduct remains in the background of what will be said. For if happiness was not at least partially within the grasp of man, if his actions could in no way contribute to his becoming happy, then the

³By this I mean only that happiness's contingency on conduct, as opposed to fortune, has yet to be determined.

discussion of living well would be irrelevant. But conduct appears to be especially relevant, as it is what must first be discussed in order to answer the previous questions. Not merely living, but living the good life, engaging in the best activities, is what must be taken up, and this suggests that conduct is a crucial element of happiness (1214 a31). Living well presumably means directing one's actions toward some end, and there are only three ends that admit of being most desirable: prudence ($\eta\delta\epsilon\lambda\gamma$), excellence ($\nu\delta\gamma\gamma\lambda$), and pleasure ($\pi\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$).⁴ These ends are thought to be good because each is held to be most desirable for man, and in so far as living in accord with one of these ends is what is meant by the good life, living well is properly understood as most desirable for man. As that which is most desirable, the good life, once engaged in, would seem to have achieved happiness.⁵ “But to be happy and to live blissfully and finely may consist chiefly in three things deemed to be most desirable” (1214 a31). There is an obvious problem, however. Just as there was no universal consensus over how happiness is acquired, so too does the most desirable end elude unanimous agreement. The issue of living well, presumably raised in an effort to clarify the previous ambiguity, has resulted in yet another uncertainty. Thus, Aristotle has begun the *Eudemian Ethics* with three important questions: How is happiness related to the living well? How is happiness acquired? and What end is most desirable as a means to happiness?

Having established, albeit in an unclear way, that happiness and living well are related, Aristotle directed us toward a consideration of what living well entails. Living well was shown

⁴While Rackman translates ($\nu\delta\gamma\gamma\lambda$) as goodness, I think it more fitting for now to render it as excellence or virtue so as not to confuse it with the property of happiness that was translated as goodness ($\nu\eta\epsilon\lambda\gamma$).

⁵Although the exact way in which this occurs has yet to be determined.

to be directing one's actions in accordance with the end most desirable for man, an end as yet to be determined. The key to understanding this all important end lies in distinguishing between what constitutes the good life and what serves as the indispensable conditions for possessing the good life (1214 b13). According to Aristotle, this distinction, not to be overlooked, is the cause of the problems we have experienced thus far; "for these are the causes of the disputes about the real nature of happiness and about the means of procuring it" (1214 b25). In order to arrive at some measure of clarity on these matters, Aristotle suggests examining the opinions of the wise in order to see in what manner they distinguish between the activities of living well and the conditions necessary in order to live well.⁶ This seems reasonable, as knowing the difference between what are the necessary conditions for the good life and what are the proper activities of living well is to know which means are at our disposal to facilitate proper living. It also, as Aristotle shows, brings us back to one of our original questions (1215 a12). The answer to how one acquires happiness ultimately lies in the distinction between the conditions for, and the activities of, the good life. This distinction makes clear the relevance of conduct and activity for the good life, but it also shows that the good life requires certain conditions that may or may not be enjoyed by all men. If happiness is solely in the realm of conduct, then it can properly be equated with living well, and can be accessible to all who conduct themselves in the correct manner. Once the matter of proper conduct is understood, a didactic lesson in happiness could presumably be developed for all men as men, regardless of nature, the whims of the gods, or the fickleness of fortune. If happiness, however, is not purely a matter of conduct, if its conditions

⁶One must ask, however, why it is necessary to examine only the opinions of the wise. This seems to suggest that the key to living well is known only by the wise, as all others would have no knowledge of the good life, and at best could live it only accidentally.

rest on things outside of the range of human choice, then its relationship to the good life remains obscure, and its accessibility is open to only a few.⁷

Thus far Aristotle has initiated a discussion of happiness and the good life that raises more questions than it answers. It is not clear if and how happiness is acquired, in what way it relates to living well, and what is meant by the good life. The only thing that is clear is the lack of agreement on these subjects, and the difficulty in coming to any sort of consensus. This seems to have been intentional on Aristotle's part, as he recognizes all of these difficulties and the need for clarification (1215 a20). The beginning of the *Eudemian Ethics*, then, was intended in some way to demonstrate the problems associated with conventional opinions of happiness, especially as they relate to living well. Aristotle suggested that the answer to the ambiguities lay in the distinction between the conditions necessary for living well, and the activity proper to the good life itself. And this question is itself answered by properly understanding happiness: whether it is a certain quality, character or disposition, or whether it is a type of activity that is only possible given a certain disposition. Aristotle has thus recast happiness in this distinction between what is necessary and what is proper to living well, and in doing so, demonstrates the way in which the previous questions can be answered. The question of how one acquires happiness is really a question of what is necessary for happiness versus what is proper to happiness. Part of this issue, however, has also been made clear. Living well is that activity most proper, or more precisely, that activity which is directed by the end most desirable for man.

⁷This is not deny the possibility that man could, to some degree, secure the conditions necessary for the good life through his own endeavors. It does suggest, however, that there may be conditions necessary for the good life that ultimately lie outside of the realm of human enterprise, such as the gifts bestowed by nature, fortune, or the Gods. What these are and to what extent, if at all, they affect human happiness remains to be seen.

This clarification settles two of the original questions, in so far as their answers are made evident by answering what end is most desirable for man.

It is here, then, that we see Aristotle taking up the issue of what is most desirable for man. Earlier Aristotle told us that there were only three ends that could possibly be thought of as most desirable for man: virtue, prudence, and pleasure. Living well meant acting in accordance with one of these ends. There are, then, three ways of life that can claim to be the good life, each having as its end one of these goods. These three ways of life are the lives of politics, philosophy (N48⁸ F⁸ N⁸ <), and pleasure, each respectively corresponding to virtue, prudence, and pleasure. All other ways of life must be excluded, for they are not properly ways of life. Instead, they are the conditions of the good life that have been mistaken for ends, and as such, they can not be truly considered as most desirable for man. Only the lives of politics, philosophy, and enjoyment have as their respective ends those goods deemed to be most desirable; only these three lives can claim to be the good life. The competition between these three ways of life, however, indicates that there can be only one truly good life, above and beyond all others.⁸ There can be only one end that is most desirable for men, and its corresponding way of life is properly the good life. Whichever of these three ways of life is highest has at its end that which is most desirable for man, and the other two, like all other ways of life, are really only conditions for living well. Thus, living well means being able to choose

⁸Eric Voegelin sums this up nicely by saying “While we may assume agreement on the term, there is definitely no agreement on the question wherein precisely the eudaimonia of man consists. Three principal opinions are in conflict with each other. Eudaimonia can be found, according to some, in a life of pleasure and enjoyment; or, according to others, in the life of politics in which pleasure is found and honor gained through the practice of excellence of character; or finally, in the life of contemplation.” Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 3, Plato and Aristotle, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 296.

what life one is going to lead – having the freedom and ability to choose amongst many choices claiming to be what only one truly is – and living according to that end which is highest.⁹ This perspective, then, shows us how Aristotle will make clear all the ambiguities that have come before.

Happiness is something that is obtainable in the realm of conduct. The realm of conduct in which happiness is a possibility, however, is not itself open to all people. These lives of politics, philosophy, and enjoyment are not open to all men. They are open only to those whom fortune gives the opportunity and power to live politically, philosophically, or pleasurably (1215 a34). The role that fortune plays in providing these opportunities and powers suggests that happiness is at least partly dependent on circumstance. If happiness is contingent on the circumstantial, conduct can, at best, play only a partial role. This suggestion seems to exclude many, if not most, men from being truly happy, as fortune does not benefit most men by providing the opportunity to be political, philosophical, or pleased.¹⁰ By directing the examination so as to differentiate between the conditions necessary for the good life and the

⁹These two requirements for living well seem to be necessary, not in so far as they have value apart from living well, but because the essence of living well demands it. To have all the ways of life open as possibilities means that the conditions for the good life have been secured, and all that remains is a choice. Likewise, to live according to a chosen end is to have the ability, unencumbered by constraints (whatever they may be), to live as one sees fit.

¹⁰This is true, as we will see, because each requires certain ‘necessities’ that are not likely to be shared by all men. It will suffice for now to point out that the ability to be philosophical requires a certain disposition and intellectual aptitude not common among all, or even most, men. Cf. footnote six.

activities proper to the good life, Aristotle has shown that true happiness seems to be out of reach for most men.¹¹

In order to determine the true nature of happiness, that which is properly understood to be living well, the highest way of life must first be considered. It is through an understanding of the highest way of life that one knows how to live well and to acquire all good things. For those whom fortune provides the opportunity, the choice is among three ways of life that each provide a different end directing their activities. These ends define their respective ways of life, and as such, they themselves must be evaluated with respect to one another, showing which is most conducive to happiness. Aristotle makes clear what activities are involved in each way of life, suggesting that philosophy is concerned with both the theoretical and practical wisdom associated with the truth, politics with the fine and noble actions, and enjoyment with the pleasures of the body (1215 b2).¹² Having made clear these three alternatives and what each involves, Aristotle does what he previously proposed, putting this all important and now clear question to the insights of those deemed to be wise. In this way, then, Aristotle suggests that it is finally time to distinguish which way of life is highest, and which ones are only conditions for living well.

¹¹Whether or not happiness can be considered in non-absolute terms remains to be seen.

¹²Note here that in describing the life of philosophy, Aristotle uses both the words prudence (ND<OF 4<) and contemplation (2gTD\<V<) (1215 b3). Rackman chooses, for whatever reason, to leave practical wisdom out of his translation.

Anaxagoras

It is here that we see Aristotle's first example of a wise man (1215 b7). Anaxagoras, the Pre-Socratic natural philosopher, is the first wise man whose opinion must be examined. When asked the question of who is truly happy, Anaxagoras agrees with Aristotle that the conditions necessary for living well, which are thought by many to be the good life, are not themselves most desirable for man. Instead, Aristotle assumes that Anaxagoras understands living well to be something else, wholly separate from the mere conditions of the good life; "the person who humanly speaking enjoys bliss is he that lives by the standard of justice without pain and in purity, or participates in some form of divine contemplation" (1215 b11-14). By putting this important question to the wise, Aristotle has demonstrated that wise men agree about differentiating between the necessary conditions for and proper activities of the good life.

Even with this agreement, however, Aristotle seems unsatisfied. The question was which life was highest, the most desirable for man. Aristotle disagrees with what Anaxagoras believes to be the proper activities of living well.¹³ The reason for this disagreement lies in Anaxagoras's answer. Anaxagoras thought that being happy was engaging in a mixture of the three things thought to be most desirable for man. To live according to the standards of justice is to live the political life. These standards of justice seem to define what the fine and noble activities are, in distinction to either those activities engaged in merely as a means to something else, or to the conventional opinions on these matters. The standards of justice, for Anaxagoras, exist outside of the useful means or mere convention; they transcend the necessary conditions for the good

¹³It can be assumed the Aristotle disagrees with Anaxagoras's answer because, as we will see, he continues the examination (which would not be needed if the answer had been sufficient) and will later ask Anaxagoras a slightly modified version of the same question.

life. Likewise, to contemplate the divine things is to live the life of philosophy.¹⁴ Pure theoretical contemplation, thinking on those things which are higher than man, is, for Anaxagoras, the proper pursuit of the philosophical life. Any other subject matter concerns the conditions necessary for living well, not living well itself. The third end most desirable for man, the life of enjoyment, distinguishes itself from the necessary conditions by making clear exactly what enjoyment is. For Anaxagoras, the life of pleasure defines itself by the absence of pain. Any other pleasures, bodily or otherwise, are either conditional pleasures or experiences inappropriately thought to be the true pleasures of living well.¹⁵

For Anaxagoras, then, living well was engaging in the activities of all three ways of life, understood as he presented them, without choosing one singularly as the highest way of life. But this understanding is unsatisfying to Aristotle. Anaxagoras has disagreed with Aristotle's definition of the ways of life that correspond to virtue, philosophy, and pleasure, particularly with the notion that a hierarchy may exist with respect to these ends. The activities proper to each way of life are not clear, and as such, which way of life is highest cannot yet be determined. Moreover, whether or not the highest way of life has one proper activity, or engages in the activities of all three ends, is also disputed, as Anaxagoras suggested by not differentiating among them.

Earlier Aristotle implied that happiness was, in all likelihood, open to very few men (1215 a34). To those whom happiness was a possibility, the choice was between living the life

¹⁴It should be kept in mind that Anaxagoras's type of philosophizing is very different from what Aristotle previously said constituted the life of philosophy. Cf. footnote eight.

¹⁵Neither Anaxagoras nor Aristotle, however, are clear about what living in purity entails.

of politics, philosophy, or enjoyment. Aristotle's use of Anaxagoras as an example, however, has shown that even among the wise there is disagreement about happiness, both in how the activities of the ends in competition are defined, and whether or not happiness is living according to a single end or a combination of all three ends into one way of life. Aristotle addresses the latter question first by asking, "which of the things contained in being alive is preferable, and which when attained would fully satisfy a man's desire" (1215 b18-20). By framing the question in this manner, Aristotle forces us to consider why it is that we exist, and for what reason we would prefer to exist than to not exist. It is not, then, a question of mere existence, it is a question of existence with a purpose, with a proper end. Mere existence, by itself, would not be preferable to non-existence. Only when existence has a purpose is it worth existing. And all purposes are not the same, as Aristotle shows us by differentiating between man and beast (1216 a38). To exist solely for the reason an ox exists, the pleasures associated with sustaining and procreating bodies, is not proper for man.¹⁶ Man has a higher form of existence, a higher nature, the desires of which are unique to him alone. To identify and engage this higher nature is the reason for man's existence, and it is the key to his fulfillment. Thus, the fulfillment of all of man's desires, from the lowest to the most high, is to be happy as only a man can be happy.

Moreover, that end which is supreme must, in some respect, be self-sufficient. By setting up the discussion in this way, Aristotle leaves us with two possible ways of understanding self-sufficiency. Either the end for the sake of which existence is preferable is able to fully satisfy the desires through its activities alone, or it is the supreme end because its activities in some way

¹⁶This is not to say that man should not, in some way, partake of these pleasure in some form or fashion. It means only that these pleasures cannot be that for the sake of which men exist, as there would then be no differentiation between man and beast.

subsume all others activities, either essentially or accidentally. Anaxagoras's answer, then, seems all the more unsatisfying. By muddling together the three ends in his answer he has neither answered which is most desirable, nor in what way each can be said to be happy (by fulfilling the desires). If there are several ends, and hence several ways of life by which man can become happy, then it can be said that there are several reasons he could choose to exist rather than not, and several ways of completely satisfying his desires. Anaxagoras's answer, then, does not underscore the notion of choice as an essential of living well. Aristotle's question appears to be an attempt to clarify if choice is involved in living well, and thus, if one way of life is singularly happy, or if happiness must be all three ways of life rolled into one.

The origin of this question came from a disagreement with Anaxagoras, and as such Aristotle seeks to clarify Anaxagoras's answer. The latter said that the happiest way of life was one that embraced the lives of politics, philosophy, and enjoyment. Based on this, a man would come into existence for all of these ends, as happiness would be engaging in all three. When he is asked for the sake of which specifically one would come into existence, however, Anaxagoras changes his answer (1216 a11). Instead, Anaxagoras asserts that the good most desirable for man, the good for the sake of which existence is preferable to non-existence, is to contemplate the heavens (1216 a13-14). For Anaxagoras, then, a certain sort of philosophizing is the highest way of life, the most desirable thing for man as man, and completely self-sufficient.

To be happy, according to Anaxagoras, is to pursue a knowledge of the divine things, the things that are higher than man. This sort of philosophizing championed by Anaxagoras is that through which, when he is engaged, man is most happy. Contemplation of the heavens is the end for which man would choose to exist rather than not. It is also that which is most desirable; it

fulfills the desires as nothing else can, and is, therefore, truly happy. But there seems to be something lacking in Anaxagoras's answer, as Aristotle does not accept Anaxagoras's understanding of either the philosophical life or of happiness. If happiness is the full satisfaction of the desires, both the highest and the lowest, then one who lives well will be happy because he somehow fulfills all of his desires. But it is hard to see how Anaxagoras's way of life would be truly happy, since his wisdom cannot tell him what true happiness is. Knowledge of the divine things cannot fulfill all of the human desires, it cares little if any for the human things. At best contemplating the heavens could fulfill man's desire to speculate, but it could not account for the other desires that must be fulfilled in order to be truly happy.¹⁷ The way of life devoted to knowing the divine things lacks an appreciation for the human things; its content makes no pronouncements about good, better, and best. It is concerned only about what is; it admits of no degrees. Aristotle has shown that Anaxagoras is wrong in claiming to know true happiness; his knowledge cares nothing for human beings, their fully satisfied desires, or their happiness.

By demonstrating the shortcomings of Anaxagoras's opinion, Aristotle has made clear the deficiencies of divine contemplation with regard to living well. Engaging in divine contemplation as a way of life is not self-sufficient. Its activities neither fulfill all of the human desires alone, nor subsume all other activities in its process. By making these shortcomings apparent, Aristotle points out the intrinsic deficiencies of Anaxagoras's way of life. Earlier Aristotle told us that the life of philosophy was one of only three ways of life that could make a claim to being happy (1215 b1). The philosophical way of life outlined there, however, made it

¹⁷It is hard to see how contemplating the divine things could fulfill the desires for such things as friendship, love, etc.

clear that philosophy was more than just divine speculation. The true life of philosophy engages in both contemplation and prudence, and its proper claim to happiness is an active pursuit of the truth, by both contemplation and prudence, that somehow fulfills all the desires. Anaxagoras had disagreed with Aristotle, refusing to allow anything but divine things into the scope of contemplation. Everything else, according to Anaxagoras, was the conditions for living well, not the activity of living well itself. But this was Anaxagoras's flaw, according to Aristotle, in that his knowledge cares nothing for prudence, and, as such, he lacks the practical wisdom necessary to fully satiate the desires.¹⁸ Divine contemplation alone, then, is not the philosophical life proper, and Anaxagoras was, in some respects, an example utilized to make clear the distinctions between proper and incomplete philosophy.

Aristotle's attempt to make clear these three ways of life that claim to be happy is furthered by also calling into question conventional opinions about the political life. This way of life has as its end the fine and noble activities. Aristotle is quick to point out that, much like the previous case, those conventionally thought to live the political life in reality do not. By politician we properly mean those who engage in or pursue the fine and noble things for their own sake (1216 a25). Most men in politics, however, do not live the political life. They pursue the noble things, not for their own sake, but for the sake of some other end, such as gain. These political imposters pursue the noble activities as means to an end, not as ends that themselves can be wholly satisfying. It is only the truly political man who engages in noble activities for their own sake because those activities are thought themselves to be happiness. By defining the

¹⁸What prudence is and how it relates to satiating the desires, at this point, remains to be seen.

political life in this way, Aristotle also invites another comparison. Anaxagoras had speculated on the political way of life, suggesting that its fine and noble activities were part of living well. And these activities took their bearings from the standards of justice, bearings that went above and beyond mere conventional opinion. These two definitions appear at first glance to be similar, but a closer look reveals them to be quite different. Anaxagoras's notion of the political life was defined by a higher standard of justice, and the activities were fine only in relation to this standard. The fine and noble activities were not choice-worthy for their own sake, they were good only in relation to some higher good. Aristotle's definition, in distinction to Anaxagoras's, requires no such higher principle of justice (1216 a24-26). The noble activities of the political way of life claim to be happiness not because they define themselves in relation to some higher good, or because they are a means to some other end, but because by engaging in them man completely fulfills his desires. By differentiating both the conventional opinions and the opinions of the otherwise wise men from the true alternatives, Aristotle makes clear the gravity of the choice to be made without demonstrating which choice is correct.

At this point, Aristotle suggests that the discussion must examine if the best way of life has any accompanying pleasures (1216 a30). This suggestion is not followed through on, and the discussion proceeds to an examination of the two previous lives from a different perspective. In apparently leaving aside the life of pleasure, however, Aristotle forces us to wonder if he has not already dealt with it. If the two previous ways of life must be examined with respect to their constituent pleasures, pleasure itself seems to be only a contingent factor. As such, the way of life that claims pleasure as its end cannot properly be happy. Pleasure is at best a derivative of the activities engaged in by the two other ways of life. This inconsistency in Aristotle's

approach suggests that there are, in truth, only two ways of life that can seriously make a claim to be happy. But it also suggests that, as in the two previous examples, Aristotle is making use of many devices to clarify the issues being discussed.

When defining the lives of philosophy and politics, Aristotle attempted to make clear what activities were central to each life. He accomplished this through both positive and negative means, employing his own definitions while finding fault with the opinions of others. Up until now, Aristotle has made extensive use of Anaxagoras as an example, clarifying what the former believes the lives of philosophy and politics entail by making clear the limitations in the latter's opinion. At this point we see Aristotle again showing a mistake in Anaxagoras's thinking. Anaxagoras said that the highest way of life embraced all three ways of life in some manner. But just as there had been problems with the way Anaxagoras understood the lives of philosophy and politics, so too does his understanding of the life of enjoyment seem to be lacking. Anaxagoras said that the pleasures of the highest way of life were to be properly understood as a purity, defined somehow in the absence of pain. Living well, then, did not seem to be an inherently pleasurable activity; instead, pleasures commonly thought to be associated with the good life, were, in reality, either not related at all, or were merely conditions for the good life. By taking pleasure out of the competition for the highest way of life and making it a derivative of living well, however, Aristotle shows that Anaxagoras was incorrect about the activities associated with the three ends thought to be most desirable for man. Living well, if it is to be truly happy, must be more than a life of activity that is not painful. The good life must

also be pleasurable, and its activities, while not engaged in for the sake of pleasure, must be at least accidentally pleasurable.¹⁹

Socrates

Having now clarified the essential activities of the two ways of life in competition to be the highest, the discussion turns toward and examination of the ends of each life.²⁰ Aristotle tells us that we must determine what the nature of virtue and prudence are, and “whether they themselves or the actions that spring from them are parts of the good life” (1216 b40). To begin this inquiry, Aristotle makes use of his second example (1216 b4). Here we see Socrates, the man who, we are told, believed that the highest way of life was to know virtue. To include Socrates here, though, seems rather curious. Socrates is an example of a philosopher, much as Anaxagoras had been, but in a significantly different manner. Whereas Anaxagoras’s philosophizing had little to say about the human things and happiness, Socrates’ form of philosophy was devoted strictly to the human things. Socrates inquired into the nature of justice and courage, and, according to Aristotle, thought that virtue was a form of knowledge (gB4FJZ: VH) (1216 b6). This allowed him to correct Anaxagoras’s purely theoretical philosophy by forcing philosophy to turn away from the divine things, toward a focus on the human things in order to give an adequate account of the virtues. This turn seems to represent the introduction of prudence to the life of philosophy. Socrates is more properly philosophical

¹⁹Thus, pleasure is a necessary, but not proper, condition for living well.

²⁰It must be remembered that prudence is not the sole end of the life of philosophy in the same way that divine contemplation had been insufficient. It seems reasonable for Aristotle to take up prudence here as an end, however, because he has already made clear in what way divine contemplation is inadequate.

because he had an element of practical wisdom; he sought to understand the nature of those things most specifically human.

But even in Socrates' philosophizing Aristotle finds fault. For Socrates, to know justice, to have knowledge of its nature, was to necessarily be just or to act justly. Socrates' method was theoretical (2gTDOJ 460<), it was an inquiry into the nature of each virtue (1216 b21). While this procedure was fine in itself, Aristotle suggests that Socrates's method does not necessarily lead to proper action.²¹ To know the nature of justice and virtue is not necessarily to be just and virtuous. Socrates did not go far enough because his inquiry into the nature of the virtues did not ask how and from what they were produced.²² Socrates's method, then, did not seek to produce that which it sought. By concerning himself strictly with their natures, Socrates ignored the proper activities that would bring about the existence of the virtues. The Socratic method, which essentially embodied Socrates's way of life, did not fully embody the philosophical way of life. Just as Anaxagoras's theoretical wisdom was incomplete by itself, so too is Socrates's practical wisdom incomplete; it lacked the ability to effect the desired outcome.²³ Aristotle seems to

²¹It is important to note that Socrates's method has begun to collapse the ends of the two competing ways of life into one all encompassing life activity. But whereas he found fault with Anaxagoras's attempt to do so, Aristotle does not criticize Socrates for proceeding in such a way. On the contrary, Aristotle's criticism is that Socrates had not gone far enough in his endeavor. This crucial point appears to answer the question posed earlier about the self-sufficiency of the highest end. Aristotle's use of examples points toward an end that fully satisfies the desires by being the supreme end, that which, in its activities, fully subsumes all other activities as conditions of its own existence. What the examples have not made clear yet is which end is the supreme end, and which is merely in its service.

²²It is possible that Socrates proceeded no further because he assumed action would follow necessarily from knowing.

²³Note that while Aristotle finds fault with both Socrates and Anaxagoras for being incomplete with respect to the truly philosophical life, it is by no means for the same reason.

suggest that the true philosophical way of life, at least in part, will both contemplate the virtues and seek to bring them about.²⁴ Thus, the fully philosophical life must both understand the nature of virtue and the means for bring about virtuousness or virtuous activities if it is to fully realize the necessary component of practical wisdom and become an end for the sake of which one would act.²⁵

At first glance this assertion appears entirely consistent with the direction of the discussion thus far. What is not so consistent upon reflection is the direction the discussion itself has taken. Aristotle's use of Socrates as an example was in the context of examining the natures of both prudence and virtue, and the respective lives of philosophy and politics that corresponded to each. The context showed that the philosophical life proper must take into account the means for bringing about virtue. This implies that the truly philosophical life, receiving part of its direction from prudence, must account for the end previously assigned to the political life. The fine and noble activities that once constituted the core of virtue are now subsumed under the rubric of prudence, signifying their dependence on philosophy for legitimacy. But this is problematic for two reasons. First, Aristotle originally presented us with the two respective lives of philosophy and politics, each being wholly separate from the other,

²⁴This is not to say that an additional distinction must be added to the necessary and proper dichotomy. It only suggests that what is proper contains, in some form, both knowing and doing.

²⁵It is interesting, at this point, to speculate a little deeper about Aristotle's use of examples. Socrates was known for being well versed in the doctrines of his philosophical predecessors. This included those of Anaxagoras, which he is said to have studied in his youth, only to repudiate in later years. By using both Anaxagoras and Socrates as examples of informed, yet ultimately incomplete philosophy, Aristotle places himself as the culmination of a venerable philosophical succession. One must wonder why Aristotle skips his own teacher, the curiously absent link in this succession.

having a separate property of happiness as its end. Now the lives have been intermingled, as the life of philosophy must properly take into account virtue to fulfill its prudential element.

Second, the fine and noble activities of the political life claimed to be happy because they were good in themselves. The virtues of the political life were supposed to be self-sufficient, suggesting that they could fulfill all of man's desires and make him happy. When virtue finds itself under the dominion of prudence, thereby fulfilling the requirements of philosophy, is it any longer choice-worthy for its own sake? The fine and noble activities now seem to be engaged in only for the sake of philosophy.²⁶ Until the highest end is established, and the necessary and proper distinction with regard to the good life is clarified, the exact relationship between these two ends will remain obscure. These questions must be kept in mind as we rejoin Aristotle's discussion, which now moves to examine the nature of happiness as a whole.

Happiness, according to Aristotle, is the greatest of all human goods (1217 a22). The highest state or character a man can aspire to is happiness. This places happiness as the ultimate end of human action. And the discussion, to this point, has shown that happiness, as an end of human action, is self-sufficient, the complete satisfaction of the desires. Aristotle tells us that only man can be happy because only man has a higher nature, one whose activities, once fully realized, can totally fulfill his desires (1217 a25). This unique nature of man differentiates him from the animals, who are inferior to him by nature (1217 a26). But what in his nature specifically differentiates man from the beasts is curious indeed. Man is capable of happiness, whereas animals are not, according to Aristotle, because he "possesses in his nature a share of

²⁶The inexactness of this relationship also leaves open the opposite possibility, which is that philosophy is ultimately in the service of the political, and that philosophy is only good in so far as it helps one to lead a more virtuous life.

something divine” (1217 a29). This single element of man’s nature enables him to participate in things or activities that are good, and as such, allows for the possibility of living well. Aristotle chooses not to elaborate upon this distinctly human feature, but assures us that it will be considered at a later point (1217 a30). It seems sufficient for now that our discussion of happiness, and its relation to the lives of philosophy and politics, must be mindful of this peculiar element of man’s nature, an element whose activity in some way must be self-sufficient.²⁷

As we saw at the beginning of the *Eudemian Ethics*, goodness is one of three properties contained in happiness. While Aristotle does not retract this in the present discussion of happiness, he does suggest that happiness can itself be understood as a good, the greatest of all human goods.²⁸ Happiness, then, is *the* human good, a good that itself has goodness as a property. Engaging in activities that correspond to the properties of happiness help to bring about those properties, which once attained, constitute being happy. Following from this, it would seem that living well would require engaging in activities that bring about, either essentially or accidentally, all three properties of happiness.²⁹ The way in which this is done, however, is not self-evident. There are many good things, some of which admit of being other than themselves, and some that do not. Activity can deal only with the good things that admit of being other than

²⁷Interestingly enough, this addition at first seems oddly similar to Anaxagoras’s type of philosophy. The difference between the two is not yet clear, but because of what has already been seen, one can be reasonably certain that the two are not equivalent.

²⁸This seems to explain how and why Aristotle opened the *Eudemian Ethics* by saying happiness was the best of all things whatsoever

²⁹What is not clear, at least yet, is what activities correspond with what ends, and how those ends themselves correspond with the properties of happiness.

themselves, since action involves the ability to decide between one of at least two options. The focus of activity, then, is the realm of the choice, and this realm, for Aristotle, deals with the practical things. And, as Aristotle points out, happiness is a practical thing, something that exists within the sphere of human possibility (1217 a40).

We have already seen that living well entails the ability to choose what is best and to act according to our choice. Aristotle reemphasizes this point by asserting that practical (ADV6J` <) has two meanings, both the ends for which we act, and the means (activities) we employ to achieve these ends (1217 a36). Happiness, as a practical human possibility, requires proper choice at two levels: what ends a man should act according to, and what activities he should employ to get there. Thus, happiness deals with both types of goods: those that admit of change and those that do not. The former must be decided in light of the latter in order for the good life to be achieved. But Aristotle has still not answered the all important question of what ends we should choose. The lives of philosophy and politics originally had separate ends, each claiming to have activities that brought about self-sufficient happiness. Through his examples Aristotle has curiously related the two lives, suggesting that the highest way of life is one that incorporates the ends of both philosophy and politics. This does not, however, answer the question of which is highest, the supreme end whose activities subsume all other activities. Nor has he answered how the ends of each way of life correspond to the properties of happiness, a question that must be answered if the activities of the good life are to properly account for all three properties. It is in the context of these questions that we see Aristotle taking up the issue of the best, and its relationship to the absolute good.

To resolve the questions raised through the course of the discussion, Aristotle asserts that we must consider what the best is, and in what manner one can speak about the best (1217 b1). For if the good life is to be properly understood, the supreme end of activity can come to light only through the perspective of the best, supreme end. Likewise, the proper activities of that end can only be determined with reference to the best, and in what manner the best may be applied. The answer to this question, according to Aristotle, lies somewhere in the opinions about the absolute good (1217 b2). This implies, as it has before, however, that a problem exists. The nature of the best, that which must be known in order to determine which end is supreme, is disputed. In what now seems to be characteristic fashion, Aristotle attempts to answer the current question by bringing to light another problem instead of providing an easy answer to satisfy the inquiry. Aristotle assures us that the answer to this question lies somewhere within the context of three opinions (1217 b1). These include that the absolute good is the best of all things, that it is the first among and the cause of all goods, and that it is identifiable and indistinguishable from the form (idea) of the good.³⁰ After a relatively short proof demonstrating the problems inherent in these opinions (that the form of the good is an idle abstraction, that it is unsound, and that it is impractical), Aristotle explains that the proper method for seeking the supreme end is by finding it in the context of things known (or thought) to be good, “But the proper method is to start from things admitted to be good, for instance health, strength, sobriety of mind . . .” (1218 a21). If that which is best is most supreme, both in terms of the end itself

³⁰Aristotle seems to have Plato in mind here, particularly what is known today as Platonic metaphysics. Strangely enough, Aristotle never mentions Plato by name. This is particularly peculiar because he has had, up to this point, no reservations about being openly critical of other philosophers, such as Anaxagoras and Socrates, when he is making an example of them.

and the activity that brings about the desired end, then the absolute good will exist somehow in all good things. Aristotle reminds us to be mindful of what we are really seeking, however. The question of the best or supreme good is a qualified question; we seek the best or supreme good with regard to living well. This is an important difference, as the good our question demands is one that admits of change and is practical. Thus, we must look to the good things that are in the realm of activity, ones that are related to living, or more precisely, to the appetites, “and how can one suppose that things not possessing life can have appetites” (1218 a28).

What distinguishes a good thing from a not-good thing in the realm of the practical? Aristotle suggests that when we examine those things that are deemed to be good practically, we must try to “prove that beauty is present even more in the unchanging, for all these admitted goods consist in order and rest, and therefore, if that is so, the things unchanging are good in an even greater degree, for they possess order and rest in an even greater degree” (1218 a23-25). In our ever elusive quest to find the supreme human end, the absolute good, all practical goods must be examined to find the beauty that is inherent in each. Aristotle’s rather vague way of answering our questions with other questions is beginning to shed some light on our present dilemma. While he has left the issue of the supreme human end unresolved, what Aristotle has done by introducing this notion of beauty is to elucidate how we are to understand the properties of happiness in relation to the two ends in competition. Pleasure, as we have already seen, is not an end in itself, it is something that properly accompanies the true activities of the good life accidentally. Aristotle seems to be asserting here that beauty, like pleasure, is also not an end in itself. As a property of happiness, it is inextricably intertwined with the activities of living well.

It is not, however, an end of action. It seems to be something that occurs once the end of the activity is achieved. Using Aristotle's own examples, the three goods; health, strength, and sobriety of mind (FTnD` Fb<ZH) all possess beauty as a characteristic once they are achieved. This seems to be the point of Aristotle's insistence that we find beauty in the unchanging state of these goods. Full beauty is present in these goods once achieved; a man possesses more of the properties of happiness when he is healthy, strong, and has a sober mind than when is engaging in activities that would make him healthy, strong, or intellectually sober. Practical goods for man, once achieved, provide him with two properties of happiness: he derives pleasure from the activity that attempts to achieve the good, and he attains beauty when the good is achieved. This beauty, as Aristotle has mentioned, is defined by order and rest. Once man has attained the object of his activities, order and rest characterize his soul. Thus, the activities of the good life are pleasurable, and the soul that engages in these activities is beautiful.

Much like before, however, one step toward clarification puts us two steps away from our answer. What do order and rest as conditions of the soul mean? Order and rest are clearly accidental qualities, they are not the reason one engages in the activities. But this tells us nothing about what these qualities represent, or to what they refer. It is reasonable to think that order refers to the condition of the soul once it has engaged in the activities of a good and brought that good into existence within the soul. Order, understood in this way, is the proper state of the soul with regard to any given good, the appropriate disposition for man as man. Rest, much like order, appears to be a condition of the soul, but one that has to do with an element of the soul. For there to be rest in the soul there has to first be restlessness within the soul. So far the only hint Aristotle has given was when, describing the proper method for

finding the absolute good, he asserted that goodness was related to living (1218 a24-28). Part of living is to have appetites, appetites that must be fulfilled if one is to possess the good life. Rest, as a property of beauty and thus of happiness, seems to be related in some way to bringing calm to the otherwise restless appetites and desires of the soul. In this way, then, having made clear that two of the three properties of happiness are necessary conditions of the good life, it seems Aristotle may finally be pointing us in the proper direction to find our answer. For we say that goodness ($\forall x (x \text{ is good} \rightarrow x \text{ is beautiful})$) is the only property of happiness remaining that may shed light on the proper end and activities of living well.

At this point, Aristotle's procedure has now become reasonably clear. In our efforts to find the supreme end for man, the object of the good life, he has led us to see that two of the three properties of happiness, pleasure and beauty, are necessary conditions of the good life.³¹ The remaining property of happiness, goodness, emerges as the only property that can be more than just necessary for the good life; goodness seems to be proper to the good life. This possible relationship between living well and goodness appears to be further strengthened by having come to light in the search for the absolute good, a search originally undertaken to discern the best, supreme end for man. Like any good dialectical discussion, though, nothing comes very easily. Our search for the absolute good, while providing a measure of clarity with regard to beauty, has itself become much more problematic. Aristotle initially instructed us to look for the absolute good by examining several practical goods, each deemed to be good in some manner.

³¹To say the pleasure and beauty are necessary conditions of the good life does not imply that they are analogous to things such as food and drink. Food and drink would properly be conditions for basic living, but pleasure and beauty distinguish themselves as being conditions for something higher, namely, living well.

The examination of these goods did not bring us to any clarity regarding the absolute good, it only showed us the proper nature of beauty. The answer to this dilemma may exist not in what we found, but in the way in which we found it and what that process itself tells us about our question.

By examining the practical goods we found that there was a relationship between their goodness, as practical goods, and living. This relationship to living involved the human appetites, as engaging in the activities of these goods brought rest to the otherwise restless desires. Following from this, it seems that the practical goods are good because they correspond to desires within the soul, desires that would inhibit living well if they were not either quieted or channeled. And this seems to be the direction Aristotle is pointing toward when he says, “And the statement that all existing things desire some one good is not true; each thing seeks its own particular good, the eye sight, the body health, and similarly another thing another good” (1218 a30-33). Man is a complex being, a composite of several elements that each seek their own good. The practical goods are good in so far as they satisfy the elements of man’s soul while providing the conditions necessary for the good life.³² The absolute good must then be higher than these practical goods; it must account for each of them as goods through its own goodness.

Equating the absolute good with the goodness that is a property of happiness now seems all the more appropriate. It also sheds some light on the three original views put forward

³²That the practical goods do not necessarily satisfy the desires as desires but as a means to a greater good, i.e. living well, is demonstrated by what was said about the life of pleasure. The life of pleasure would be one dedicated to satisfying the soul’s desires as an end, particularly the desires of the body as opposed to the mind. This life, we have seen, is not a truly happy one. The satiation of the desires to the extent that the conditions necessary for the good life exist seem to be the only function of the practical goods.

in which Aristotle said we would find our answer. It is true that the absolute good is the best of all things, that it is the first of all goods, and the cause of all goods. It is not these things because it is the metaphysical form of the good, but because it is all-inclusive; it subsumes all the lesser goods and gives their goodness meaning with reference to life and the activities of living. This is why Aristotle also calls the absolute good the chief good. It is that which gives meaning to lesser goods with reference to man; “the object aimed at as end is the chief good, and is the cause of the subordinate goods and first of all; so that the absolute good would be this - end of the goods practicable for man” (1218 b10-13). The absolute good, then, is the supreme end that we have been searching for, the one whose activities constitute the good life and subsume all other activities that contribute to happiness. It is also that which the practical sciences, the ones that deal with the practical goods of man, have as their guide.³³

Let us take a moment to recap what we have seen so far. The *Eudemian Ethics* opened by examining the nature of happiness and its relationship to the good life. In doing so, Aristotle showed us that there were only three lives that could legitimately claim to be happy: the lives of politics, philosophy, and pleasure. Through the course of the discussion Aristotle made use of two main examples, Anaxagoras and Socrates, in an attempt to clarify what living these lives really entailed, apart from the conventional opinions. The outcome of these examples, however, showed that the good life was a strange mixture of all three ways of life, intertwining the activities and ends of the political and philosophical life without making clear what was

³³Aristotle lists politics, economics, and wisdom as the practical sciences of man that take their bearings from the absolute good. They differ, according to Aristotle, in the way they deal with man as an end within their own sphere (1218 b12-14). What this means, and how it relates to our quest for the highest way of life, remains to be seen.

necessary and what was proper to living well. What was not clear was which end was highest, meaning whose activity subsumed the activities of all three ways of life. Aristotle directed our inquiry to a discussion of the absolute good, that good which subsumed all the properties of happiness through its activities. This discussion clarified two properties of happiness, pleasure and beauty, as being both parts of the good life as well as necessary conditions for the good life. It also made clear that the absolute good was the highest of the goods, that which serves to give meaning and guide all of the practical goods. But it failed to make clear what the absolute good itself was, particularly as it relates to the human soul, its activities, and its desires. The nature of the absolute good and its specific relationship to the soul, then, still eludes our examination, an examination that must now move forward while keeping in mind these still unresolved issues.

CHAPTER III: Virtue and Justice

This apparent dilemma leads into the second chapter of the *Eudemian Ethics*. By looking to the good things, we had hoped to find the nature of the absolute good so that the highest end could be determined and the path to happiness could be established. Instead we found that the commonality among the good things further obscured the previously distinctive properties of happiness, interrelating them in such a way as to make two of the properties partly conditions for living well, not the end of the good life itself. The absolute good, the supreme end that man could aim for, was that which subsumed all of the necessary activities involved in living well. The activities of the good life encompassed beauty and pleasure necessarily, both as results and as conditions of living well. By encompassing two of properties of happiness, the absolute good seemed related more specifically to goodness, which was the third property of happiness.¹ And this supreme end also served as the guide for all sciences predicated on practical goods; the standard or measure to which even the comprehensive human sciences turned.² But what this absolute good, this supreme end of all human activities and lives, actually is still eludes the investigation.

The ambiguity that remains at the end of the first chapter seems somehow necessary for the direction the discussion will take in the subsequent chapters. The second chapter begins by dealing with this ambiguity in a rather odd way, with a call for a fresh starting point that will direct our attention to new discussion of the good things (1218 b30). Aristotle explains to us that

¹This relationship, as of now, is only an insinuation.

²These sciences were politics, economics, and prudence (ND` <ZXF4H). How these three distinguish themselves remains to be seen.

all goods are either external or within the soul (1218 b33). The key to our new beginning is to properly understand these goods as they relate to the human soul.³ The goods that we seek – the ones considered preferable for making men happy – are the goods contained within the soul. All of these goods within the soul fall into one of three categories: prudence (ND` <ZXF 4H), virtue, and pleasure (1218 b34-35). Each of these categories, understood as types of goods within the soul, constitute an end. The goods that fall within the category of prudence contribute to prudence as an end. So too with virtue and pleasure; all of the goods associated with these categories within the soul fall under an end that defines the category. These ends must be viewed with reference to the nature of the soul itself, a nature that is composite. An understanding of the nature of the soul, then, is crucial, for it will presumably reveal how the categories of goods fits together with the soul as a whole.

An examination of the soul reveals that it can be divided into two divisions or categories: states and work (1218 b37-38). The state of the soul is its natural capacity, the potential it has to become whatever it is most inclined to by nature. The work of the soul is the activities or processes engaged in to bring about the end and actualize the potential of the soul's state. The state of the soul influences its work by setting the parameters in which the latter can work: the work can only actualize the potential it is given.⁴ Aristotle tells us, however, that the work of the soul is nevertheless more important than the state of the soul. Only through the work of the soul can the potentiality of the soul be fully actualized. And when the soul's work fully actualizes its

³Presumably this would be done in an attempt to understand in what way and for what purpose these goods satisfy the desires.

⁴It is in this way that we can start to see how the acquisition of happiness can be affected by such things as nature.

potential, it can be said that the soul has achieved its best disposition. The best disposition of the soul, according to Aristotle, is its virtue; “let it be assumed as to virtue that it is the best disposition or state or faculty of each class of things that have some use or work” (1218 b40-41). This best disposition is the nature of the soul proper, and a fully realized soul seems to be a, if not the, good. The work that brings this actualization into being can be appropriately deemed the best work, or the means most suited to the end.

To reiterate, the work of the soul brings about the mature nature of the soul by engaging in activities. This fully actualized soul is a virtuous soul, one that has maximized its full potential. Following from this, it seems as though the goods within the soul that fall into the category of virtue are those goods that help to bring about the fully realized, virtuous soul. These goods, then, seem to be practical goods, goods within the soul that help to bring about a higher end. And if the soul is fully realized, it would seem reasonable to think that the soul is happy. Here Aristotle seems willing to acknowledge this possibility, telling us that it is by engaging in proper, or the best activities, that the soul is brought closer to happiness (1219 a35). Happiness is when the human soul engages in the best activities, directed by the greatest ends, in an effort to bring about the best and most fully realized state (appropriate to its natural character). And when a soul performs the best work, according to the best ends, and brings about the best state, it is considered to be perfectly virtuous, to be leading the good life, and to be happy. Happiness, then, is to be understood as perfection, facilitated by the activity of the perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue.⁵ “And since we say that happiness is something

⁵Understanding happiness as an activity, however, seems problematic for three reasons. First, as an activity, one who at any time is not engaged in these yet to be determined virtuous actions would seemingly not be happy. As it is strange to think it possible to be actively

perfect, and life is either perfect or imperfect, and the same with virtue, but the activity of imperfect things is imperfect, it would follow that happiness is an activity of perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue (1219 a35-39).

Thus, our inquiry has gone full circle, taking us back to where our ambiguity originally left us. We originally sought the absolute good, the supreme end of human activity. Our search had clarified two properties of happiness in the process (beauty and pleasure), but it had left open the third – goodness – and its relationship to the absolute good. Aristotle required us to take a new approach if we were to understand this ambiguous relationship, one that began from the divisions within the soul. The divisions within the soul showed us how it was that happiness could be properly understood, as a life of activity that fully realizes the potential in the soul. This life of perfect activity, the good life proper, is the life of virtue, and it is the perfect good; “therefore this is the perfect good, which as we saw is happiness” (1219 a28-29). By pointing us to the soul, Aristotle seemingly showed us this last property of happiness, thus fulfilling all three properties of happiness while demonstrating what is required of living well.

Yet, this account leaves many questions unanswered. While he succeeded in explaining the three properties of happiness, and what that meant in terms of living, Aristotle has so far

engaged at all times, happiness would then be something of a fleeting perfection. Second, Aristotle suggests that happiness is an end, an end that itself is an activity. But this is equally as strange, for an activity always points toward some end. Thus, following this somewhat circular logic, the activities of happiness would point to the end of happiness, which is the activity of happiness. This is, of course, unless there is a higher good than happiness, toward which the activities of living well direct themselves. Third, as we saw earlier, the potential to be happy was a possibility for very few men, those to whom fortune gave the opportunity to lead certain kinds of lives. With these additional requirements of perfect activity in accordance with perfect virtue, it seems that happiness is a possibility open to an amazingly small number of men, men who both have the means and the inclination to devote themselves to the pursuit of happiness.

failed to bring clarity to our original question. We, as yet, still do not know specifically what the absolute good is, the supreme end toward and by which all our actions are directed.⁶ Presumably this supreme end would have to take the form of something more concrete than just happiness, seeing as it will dictate the way of life most proper for man as man. Moreover, Aristotle's discussion of happiness, as the activity of the perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue, is largely a theoretical discussion. He has yet to demonstrate specifically what perfect virtue is, much less how it is to be achieved practically. The only clues he has given are these three categories of goods within the soul (prudence, virtue, and pleasure), with only one having been expounded upon (albeit briefly and inconclusively). Thus, for the discussion to be complete, an account of perfect virtue must be given, one that incorporates the categories of goods within the soul while making clear what the supreme end of human action is.

Previously when Aristotle took up the issue of the absolute good, he directed the examination to a discussion of the soul. That discussion clarified the third and final property of happiness, but it failed to give a precise and adequate account of the absolute good. As we have seen through his previous procedures, this failure seems to have been intentional on Aristotle's part, as it requires us to recognize things that must first be understood before we find our answer. Here too, then, Aristotle directs our attention to the soul, asserting that virtue is a property of the soul. Understanding something as a property of something else, however, first requires understanding the thing that is in possession of the property. In order to understand the nature of

⁶This assumes that Aristotle does not mean to equate the absolute good with happiness. It seems reasonable that he would not do this, at least yet, because of the problems that would necessarily follow. Cf. footnote 4.

human virtue, we are first required to properly understand the soul, particularly as relates to virtue as a whole.⁷

Ethical Virtue

The proper way to understand the relationship between virtue and the soul is to start by viewing the soul as in possession of two rational parts: one that, by nature, discerns what to do and directs, the other that obeys the first, carrying into being its directives. “Let us begin by positing that the spirit has two parts that partake of reason, but that they do not both partake of reason in the same manner, but one of them by having by nature the capacity to give orders, and the other to obey and listen” (1219 b28-31). Aristotle cautions us that it makes no real difference if, in reality, the soul can be divided into two separate parts, each existing in isolation from one another, or if it is indivisible, yet in possession of different faculties (1219 b32-33). The soul is a whole, which itself is composed of several lesser parts all functioning within the framework of the whole. Together all of the parts constitute a whole, but the whole is not merely the sum total of those parts. As a whole the soul is complete, its nature comes to light only when the parts come together in unison, a unison that is not fully explained by dividing the soul up into parts. Dividing the soul into parts is an abstraction Aristotle will use for our benefit, employed to make clear what it is we seek. For in doing so we may recognize the virtue of the soul, this perfect virtue that the good life requires, by recognizing how each of the parts contributes to the whole.

⁷This seems to be important in that we have been directed toward a discussion of the soul at least twice before. Each time the discussion had focused on some aspect of the soul or the ways in which the soul must be viewed if we were to properly understand what it is we sought. It seems entirely consistent for us to reexamine the soul, seeing as we are presently seeking something different (virtue).

“And just as a good constitution consists of the separate excellences of the parts of the body, so also the virtue of the soul, as being an end, is composed of the separate virtues (1220 a3-4).

Just as the soul can be divided into two parts, one that commands and one that obeys, so too can the virtue of the soul be divided into two virtues: ethical virtue (O246Z) and intellectual virtue (* 4V<` OJ 450) (1220 a4). Intellectual virtue corresponds to the commanding part of the soul, as the effectiveness of the part(s) that utilize reason (8` m <) to direct the obeying part.⁸ To be intellectually virtuous, the commanding part must have more than the ability to direct, it must actualize this potential. The commanding part of the soul, the rational part proper, must be able to utilize its potential if it is to be virtuous. Likewise, ethical virtue corresponds to the obeying part of the soul, the part that must acquiesce and be guided if it is to be virtuous. Aristotle indicates that the obeying part consists in the appetites and passions, those parts of the soul that are not themselves rational, but are capable of listening to reason (1219 b40 - 1220 a2). Ethical virtue is only realized when the desired outcome has been effected, when the appetites and passions agree to be guided and follow the guidance of the commanding part.⁹ Interestingly

⁸Note here that the Greek word 8` m < does not necessarily mean reason. It can also mean speech, which would imply that the intellectual virtue of the commanding part of the soul uses the art of persuasion to affect its desired outcome. I will continue to follow Rackman's preference for using 'reason' so as not to introduce unnecessary confusion, but the alternative rendering should be kept in mind.

⁹The necessary relationship between the intellectual and ethical virtues seems to be the reason why earlier Aristotle suggested that the activity and end of the highest way of life must account for all of man's desires, from the lowest to the highest. Each part of the soul needs the other; the obeying part needs guidance, and the commanding part needs something to command and a reason to exist, “. . . if considered as a man, he must possess a reasoning faculty for a principle and with a view to conduct, and the reasoning faculty is a principle controlling not reasoning but appetite and passions; therefore he must necessarily possess those parts” (1219 b40 - 1220 a2).

enough, however, when Aristotle refers to each of these two virtues respectively, he does so in the plural.¹⁰ This suggests that each virtue itself is a whole, composed of still lesser parts that comprise a greater excellence.¹¹ Being a whole requires an examination of the parts, one that will make clear the scope and essence of that whole. Our examination must look separately at each part of the soul and its respective virtue, seeking to determine what that virtue consists in, and more importantly, how the elements of that virtue help to bring it about.

Aristotle begins his examination by first examining ethical virtue (VDgJ OH OJ 46OH) (1220 a13). As we have seen, ethical virtue can be understood as the appetites and passions operating under the guidance of reason. Aristotle seems willing, at this point, to delve deeper into this explanation by instructing us to “let it first be taken as granted that the best disposition is produced by the best means, and that the best actions in each department of conduct result from the excellences belonging to each department” (1220 a22-24).¹² To be ethically virtuous is the best possible condition that the obeying part of the soul can attain. It consists of those activities that are proper for the appetites and the passions, presumably to be directed by the commanding part of the soul. And as a condition itself, ethical virtue is able to produce the best possible activities and emotions, “therefore virtue too is the sort of disposition that is created by the best movements in the soul and is also the source of the production of the spirit’s best actions and emotion” (1220 a29-32). Ethical virtue, then, has two faces. It is the end for which the

¹⁰Cf. 1220 a9-10.

¹¹This seems reasonable, in so far as the division of the soul into two parts was an abstraction, utilized only for the means of clarification.

¹²This holds constant the goodness of the ends, which is not properly an ethical question. Ethical questions are questions of activity within the sphere of proper passion and appetite. What exactly defines the properness of these activities, however, has yet to be determined.

obeying part of the soul acts, and it is the ground from which other potentially greater activities can occur.

By having two purposes, ethical virtue can also be thought of as both an end and a means. Being both an end and a means requires an outside justification, however, one that is more sufficient than has been given. Aristotle has not yet told us why it is that the virtue of the soul requires the obeying part to obey the commanding part.¹³ One need only reflect for a moment to realize that the appetites and the passions have ends toward which they are directed that are seemingly irrespective of the directing part (the rational part proper). These ends constitute that towards which each desire is directed – toward what will fulfill each's yearning. The appetites and passions, then, would seem to find their natural end in their completion, in the full satisfaction of each respective desire. This pursuit would seemingly be rational, in so far as the pursuit of the desires is directed by its natural end. Hunger or desire for sex would be satisfied with proper nourishment and sexual relations. One is tempted to say that the satisfaction derived from this satiation of the desires would then quiet the desires, producing harmony and order in the soul. But Aristotle is silent on this point; one can only deduce from his argument that the completion of the desires is either unimportant or potentially detrimental to a greater good.¹⁴ Let

¹³This is aside from the brief allusion to a natural hierarchy (Cf. footnote eight). But even this natural hierarchy requires further justification, especially considering the artificial divisions imposed on the soul for the sake of the discussion.

¹⁴This is further evidenced by the fact that, were the pleasures ends in themselves, the life of pleasure would have been a serious contender for the highest way of life. Appeasement or redirection, and not necessarily satisfaction, seems to be the aim of ethical virtue, an aim that necessarily has something higher in sight.

this question remain for now as we move, following Aristotle's discussion, to take up the issue of the ethical virtues at length.

Our discussion, up to this point, has led us to a quest for perfect virtue. Aristotle has suggested that perfect virtue was a disposition of the soul, and as such, our examination has attempted to understand the soul as it relates to virtue. We have found that there are two parts to the soul, each of which possesses its own virtue that is comprised of lesser virtues. This led to an examination of each part, beginning with the obeying part and its corresponding parts – ethical virtue. It is here, then, that we see Aristotle attempting to make clear how the appetites and passions perfect themselves in the virtue of the soul as a whole. When the soul engages in the best activities and emotions to bring about its own best condition, according to Aristotle, it pursues this condition in relation to pleasures and pain (1220 a39-40). The essence of ethical virtue is those activities most concerned with pleasures and pain. Aristotle tells us that ethical virtue, which can also be understood in terms of character, is instilled and developed through habit (1220 a40). The virtue of the obeying part of the soul is instilled and engendered in the soul by habituating the obeying part so that its character is open to the commands of reason. Proper habituation in this manner produces a certain character or disposition in the soul whereby the obeying part engages in the best activities in relation to the pleasures and pains accompanying any context or situation.

Habituation, properly understood as the training of the appetitive and passionate part of the soul to respond and act properly regarding pleasures and pains, is accomplished by developing the character of the obeying part of the soul. This character, otherwise known as the ethical character, is understood to be a disposition of the soul properly groomed to deal with the

pleasures and pains in accordance with reason.¹⁵ In order to understand how habituation can accomplish this, Aristotle suggests that one must first view the obeying part of the soul in light of the emotions, the faculties, and the states of character (1220 b12). Emotions, such as anger, fear, shame, and desire are reactions by the appetites and passions to pleasures and pains that the soul has experienced. In themselves the emotions are passive, anger is a reaction that the appetites and passions have to a pleasurable or painful experience. The faculties are the manners in which one acts, the quality of one's actions. The faculties, like the emotions, occur in response to pleasure and pain. But while the emotions express the feeling engendered in the appetites and passions in response to pleasure and pain, the faculties describe the manner in which the soul reacts. A man who is who is slighted unjustly feels the pain of that slight. The soul's reaction to this is to become angry. The actions of this man are then the actions of an angry man. The quality of these actions is properly understood as angry actions, which is to say that the man is said to have the faculty of anger.

The states of character cause the emotions to be present, doing so either rationally or irrationally. The state of character of the man who has been slighted is his disposition that registers and interprets his experiences. The man, when he receives the insult, reacts in a certain way according to the state of his character. The reaction, which is the engendering of the emotions, is either rational or irrational. What distinguishes between a rational and irrational reaction is the appropriateness of the response to the particular pleasure or pain experienced. If the insult the man receives is worthy of an angry response, and he reacts in anger, then his state

¹⁵This does not seem to involve the appetites and passions following the dictates of reason on any or every particular occasion. More appropriately it suggests that the obeying part of the soul is habituated to know how properly to act in any given context or situation.

of character can be said to have rationally caused the correct emotion. On the other hand, if the insult is not worthy of an angry response, yet the man becomes angry, his state of character is said to have irrationally caused an improper emotion.

What becomes clear in this discussion of the emotions, faculties, and state of character is that the first two seem almost entirely contingent upon the third. Habituating the appetites and the passions to react properly to pleasure and pain is an effort to develop the soul's state of character in an ethical manner. The ethical character, once achieved, would be the proper end of the state of character, bringing about a condition in the obeying part of the soul whereby it habitually reacts appropriately in any pleasurable or painful circumstance. But this conclusion requires once again going deeper into the argument, for Aristotle has not shown specifically what the proper or appropriate responses to pleasures and pains are. Nor has he shown what habituation is specifically, how it is that the obeying part of the soul can be groomed to react correctly without the specific guidance of the commanding part.¹⁶ To fully understand the way in which habituation can bring about the ethical character of the soul, Aristotle must now show what ethical activities are themselves.

“These distinctions having been established, it must be grasped that in every continuum that is divisible, there is excess and deficiency and a mean, and these either are in relation to one another or in relation to us”(1220 b21). All spectrums admit of more, median, and less, and these divisions exist either in relation to the spectrum itself, or in relation to us. This is significant to our present discussion because, as Aristotle makes clear, motion is a type of continuum, and conduct and activity are types of motion (1220 b28-29). Conduct, then, admits

¹⁶Aristotle has also failed to make clear how one can gauge an appropriate response.

of excess, deficiency, and a mean. And in all things relating to us, of which conduct is one, the mean is the best course of action. This is so because it is as reason (8th m <) and knowledge (gA4FJO: 0) dictate, and because it produces the best disposition (1220 b29-31). The appropriateness of a response to pleasures and pains – the proper conduct of the appetites and passions – is, then, determined by the mean. Thus, the ethical virtue of a soul, its state of character developed through proper habituation, must both be concerned with particular means and itself be a mean, as an end and a condition of the obeying part of the soul. This seems consistent with what has gone before, as we saw that ethical virtue must be understood as an end in itself (in terms of the obeying part of the soul), and as a mean to still better activities that require ethical virtue as a condition for their existence. But what is this mean that Aristotle is speaking of, and what form does it take in practical life?

Ethical virtue deals with particular means while existing as a mean itself. The virtue of the obeying part of the soul is, then, much like the soul itself. Aristotle's procedure up to this point, while itself being an abstraction, has proved fruitful for the needs of the discussion. Aristotle divided the soul up in such a way as to make clear the excellences of its constituent parts. The combined parts, all functioning in their best dispositions, contributed to the perfect virtue of the soul. Aristotle made clear, however, that the virtue of the whole soul, perfect virtue, was more than just the sum total of the virtuous parts. The perfect virtue of the soul transcended the virtue of its parts, just as the soul was a comprehensive whole not strictly reducible to crude divisions.

It was also shown that this was true of the two types of virtue as well. Both intellectual and ethical virtue were shown to be composed of lesser parts, parts that fell into one of the two

divisions of the soul represented by these two comprehensive virtues. To understand these virtues requires an examination and enumeration of their parts, just as an understanding of the soul required an examination of its divisions. Aristotle gives us such an enumeration, skipping his characteristic insistence that the discussion proceed through lengthy increments.¹⁷ Ethical virtue is the excellence of the appetites and passions. More specifically, it is the state of character proper to the appetites and passions, a state of character that engenders proper emotions and faculties. This state of character becomes recognizable as the appropriate mean with regard to each possibility only when one understands the excesses and deficiencies that plague the appetites and passions. Thus, Aristotle gives us a list of possible deficiencies, excesses, and means in order to make clear what befalls the appetites and passions, and what is proper to them.

The state of character of the appetites and passions has the potential to be excessive with regard to pleasures and pains. When the character is either excessive or deficient, it produces emotions that are either excessive or deficient, emotions that are not proper responses to the given situation. Aristotle gives us a list of forty-two emotions that the soul can experience, grouping them in trios in order to make clear how related emotions can be understood as excesses, means, and deficiencies (1220 b39 - 1221 a12).¹⁸ For example, when the soul experiences the emotion of rashness, the state of character of the appetites and passions has engendered an excessive emotion, one that exceeds the appropriateness for the situation. When it

¹⁷This may suggest all that can be said about this topic has been stated, and the present lesser virtues are not reducible to still lesser parts.

¹⁸Cf. Appendix A.

experiences the related emotion of cowardice, the engendered emotion is deficient for the given situation. The mean for these types of situations befalling the soul, presumably situations that require the soul to respond appropriately to an uncomfortable or dangerous situation, is the emotion of courage. To be courageous, then, is to have appetites and passions that are in a middle state, a state that responds with neither too much nor too little zeal in the face of danger.

While all of these emotions are related as responses the soul has to pleasure and pain, Aristotle tells us that there are different species within the genus emotion, “but the modes of emotion themselves are divided into species designated according to their difference in respect of time or intensity or in regard to one of the objects that cause the emotions” (1221 b10-13). The mean is not a constant in the soul; its application does not take a universal form. Instead, understanding the mean as the appropriate response depends on the emotion itself, a contingency based on the species of emotion. “I mean for instance that a man is called quick-tempered from feeling the emotion of anger sooner than he ought, harsh and passionate from feeling it more than he ought, bitter from having a tendency to cherish his anger, violent and abusive owing to the acts of retaliation to which his anger gives rise” (1221 a13 -16). Excess and deficiency can take different forms, from reacting too quickly or overreacting, to reacting inappropriately or in an insufficient manner.¹⁹ For the obeying part of the soul to be ethically virtuous, the character

¹⁹There are, however, such things as absolute vices. “But it must not be ignored that some of the vices mentioned cannot be classed under the heading of manner, if manner is taken to be feeling the emotion to excess” (1221 b18 - 20). Aristotle gives us adultery as an example of an absolute vice. One must wonder why it is that adultery is an absolute vice, however, as he does not make it clear what it is an excess or deficiency of, and how and why it is inappropriate for the appetites and passions.

of the appetites and passions must be formed and habituated correctly so as to respond in a proper manner.

Ethical virtue demands that the character of the appetites and passions occupy a middle state, one formed in such a way as to react appropriately to any given situation. It also demands the actions (faculties) that correspond to the appetites and passions be chosen for the right reasons and in the right manner. To this end, Aristotle goes to great lengths (from 1223 a21 - 1227 b12) to make clear what voluntary and purposive choice is. To be ethically virtuous requires that the action undertaken with regard to pleasure and pain be deliberately chosen in conformity with thought and not compulsion. An ethically virtuous man must be free to act either virtuously or viciously, and his choice must be made in light of all available choices and with full deliberation. True ethical virtue, then, presents itself as an interesting duality. First, it requires that the passions and appetites be groomed so as to ensure they respond properly and with the appropriate emotion when confronted with all the potential pleasures and pains. This seems to be the aspect of ethical virtue that dealt with the virtue of the appetites and passions as an end in itself. The proper ethical character of the obeying part of the soul was a state habituated to respond appropriately, meaning to engender the proper emotion to the given pleasure or pain. Ethical virtue as an end in itself has the effect of predisposing the appetites and passions to respond properly, without the aid of the rational part of the soul on every occasion.

The second part of ethical virtue's duality is that it functions as a means to greater activities. Properly habituated appetites and passions provide the necessary condition for virtuous activity itself. A man who wishes to be virtuous must have a virtuous disposition, as well as engage in virtuous activity. The ability to freely and voluntarily deliberate and

purposively choose what activity is most conducive to bringing about a desired end requires that the potentially virtuous man be free from external constraints as well as internal obstructions.²⁰ These internal obstructions are the product of poorly developed appetites and passions, appetites and passions whose responses will hinder, if not impair, the crucial decision-making process of this aspiring man. A properly developed ethical character will give the man the conditions necessary for determining which activities are to be pursued. “It therefore follows that since ethical virtue is itself a middle state and is entirely concerned with pleasures and pains, . . . virtue and/or *ethics* is a state of purposively choosing the mean in relation to ourselves in all those pleasant and painful things in regard to which according as a person feels pleasure or pain he is described as having some ethical quality” (1227 b6-11). The duality of ethical virtue is to have both the necessary character within one’s obeying part of the soul and the ability to choose effectively and engage in virtuous activities that deal with pleasures and pain.

Thus, Aristotle has delineated the essence of ethical virtue by showing what it pertains to and how it can be understood. This excellence of the obeying part of the soul is unique in that it functions both as an end itself and as a means to something higher. In this way, then, Aristotle shows us that ethical virtue is like many other things we have already seen, such as the fine and

²⁰Aristotle’s inclusion of purposive choice as a necessary part of ethical virtue is an important addition that, because of the limits of this project, I have failed to deal with in appropriate detail. It is important nonetheless to make clear what purposive choice is. Aristotle maintains that “it is clear that purposive choice is deliberative appetite of things within one’s power” (1226 b18-19). This follows the discussion that has gone before, particularly as it pertains to being voluntary. By being voluntary, purposive choice is neither by force or necessity. This may explain the ambiguity we saw earlier when Aristotle said the commanding part of the soul used $\delta\epsilon\iota\chi\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$ to affect its commands on the obeying part. The appetites and passions are not forced by the commanding part, they are persuaded, and persuasion, as Aristotle tells us, is a component of being voluntary (1224 a14 - 16)

noble activities of the political way of life and two of the three properties of happiness. It is, in fact, so much like these other two that Aristotle suggests understanding the duality of ethical virtue in terms of the now all too familiar necessary and proper dichotomy. Part of the duality of ethical virtue, just as it was with the properties of happiness, is that it contains within itself both the things necessary and proper to its nature. The list of forty-two emotions that included the excess, deficiencies, and the middle states was provided to show the dimensions of ethical virtue. Some of these emotions, according to Aristotle, can only be understood as emotions, not as virtues or vices in themselves. “None of these middle states, though praiseworthy, are virtues, nor are the opposite states vices, for they do not involve purposive choice; they are all in the classification of the emotions, for each of them is an emotion” (1234 a24-28). The middle states not included in the list of virtues include modesty, righteous indignation, sincerity, friendliness, and dignity. These middle states contribute to the virtues, by providing the necessary condition for the virtues to occur. The appropriate responses of the appetites and passions are necessary conditions for engaging in ethically virtuous activity, responses that take the form of middle states. The other middle states – gentleness, courage, temperance, justice, liberality, greatness of spirit, and magnificence – are all virtues in that their activities or the activities that spring from them help to bring about the proper disposition in the soul.²¹ These true virtues, then, are the proper activities of ethical virtue, the activities that must be engaged in to properly form the soul’s character.²²

²¹Notice here that when he enumerates and then describes all of the middle states and virtues, he leaves off the last one, that of prudence (ND` <OF 4H).

²²This almost necessarily implies that all ethical virtue, regardless of it being necessary or proper, is merely a condition for something higher, not an end unto itself. This may be the first

If one takes a moment to reflect on Aristotle's discussion up to this point, what begins to stand out is the problematic nature of his logic. If a man seeks to be ethically virtuous, he must both correctly choose and then properly engage in activities that will help him to develop his ethical character. His virtuous activities will habituate the state of character of his appetites and passions. To choose correctly, however, would require this man to be self-aware to such a degree that he clearly understood himself, his appetites and passions, and the possibilities open to him for habituating his obeying part.²³ The man who would be virtuous would also have to be fully self-aware, possessing an honest and comprehensive understanding of himself in order to make the correct decisions.²⁴

To be perfectly virtuous (at least in the ethical sense), however, requires a proper condition, one where the obeying part of the soul has already been habituated to respond to pleasures and pains appropriately. Only when the appetites and passions have been properly habituated can the soul discern and then engage in the most perfect activities. Thus, the man who wishes to be ethically virtuous cannot be the first cause of his own character formation. Character formation, in terms of the appetites and passions, must come from the outside, from external forces that mold and shape the soul before it is fully self-aware. And to be perfectly

step in explaining why Socrates collapsed the political and philosophical lives together into one all encompassing life, and why Aristotle criticized him for not going far enough.

²³Understanding these possibilities would also require him to have a full grasp of his context, as well as already being aware of the nature of ethical virtue and the choices involved in negotiating the mean.

²⁴It would also seem as though he would have to possess a comprehensive understanding of all contexts, at least in so far as these contexts contributed to his possessing a universal understanding of human nature. This universal awareness seems required for a true ethical virtue, particularly because Aristotle has not made virtue context specific. What this means in practice remains to be seen.

virtuous would require that this formation be as close as possible to the properly formed middle states Aristotle has already laid out.²⁵ Aristotle's logical scheme requires giving an account of man's virtue that transcends the individual and perhaps even man himself, one that can account for man's origins, foundations, and formations. It is to this end, then, that we see Aristotle move to discuss the notion of justice.

Justice

The duality of ethical virtue presents itself as a dilemma, one that can be resolved only by stepping outside of what has gone before. Given the direction of his discussion, Aristotle suggests that we must consider what justice means if we are to truly understand the nature of ethical virtue and the way it relates to the perfect virtue of the soul. This requires giving a definition of justice, one that can at least be used as a starting point of inquiry. Aristotle explains that "we observe that everybody means by justice that disposition which renders men apt to do just things, and which causes them to act justly and to wish what is just" (1129 a7-9).²⁶ In this sense justice is what our discussion originally set out to find; the nature of justice is the full fruition of ethical virtue. Aristotle seems to agree with this, suggesting that justice has two meanings, depending on whether one is referring to the faculties or the disposition (1129 a12-13). Justice, like ethical virtue, involves both necessary conditions and proper activities, each

²⁵Although this itself is strange, seeing as though Aristotle develops this scheme of ethics be taking issue with the commonly shared opinions of wise and vulgar alike. This seems to imply that true ethical virtue, to say nothing of perfect virtue, has yet to actually be seen in man.

²⁶Note here that the citations will change because the fourth, fifth, and sixth books of the *Eudemian Ethics* are the same as the fifth, sixth, and seventh of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The citations will match the fifth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* because the identical books are translated as part of the whole only in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Rackman, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 253.

with a view to bringing about some higher end. A just disposition creates the state of character necessary for one who wishes to perform just actions, and those just actions, in turn, help to form a just disposition in the soul. And Aristotle appears again to anticipate our previous questions by forcing us to consider what these necessary and proper aspects of justice are – a consideration that must take into account the two senses in which we can speak of justice.

The first sense in which we can speak of being just is when one abides by the law and is fair (1129 a35-36). Aristotle tells us that the pronouncements of the law define, in some sense, what is just and what is unjust. The man who takes more than his share of the good things is unfair with respect to both himself and others. When that same man takes this unfair amount against the pronouncements of the law, he is also unlawful. He is unjust both toward himself and toward others, and his actions go against the standards set by the law. It is the law, then, that determines what conduct is acceptable for men, both in relation to themselves and their fellow men. “And the law prescribes certain conduct; the conduct of a brave man, . . . that of a temperate man, . . . that of a gentle man, . . . and so with actions exemplifying the rest of the virtues and vices, commanding these and forbidding those - rightly if the law has been rightly enacted, not so well if it has been made at random” (1129 b19-26).

This first sense of justice, then, seems to be the answer to the question we posed earlier. The idea of ethical virtue required a first principle, something that provided the foundation from which character formation could initially take place. The virtuous man first required an ethical disposition, properly formed before he became aware of himself and his actions as they relate to proper conduct. Aristotle suggests by the direction of his discussion that this first principle of character formation is the law, which can be thought of as being comprehensive: “For lawful is

what the art of legislation has defined as such, and we call each particular enactment just. The law makes pronouncements on every sphere of life, and their aim is to secure either the common good of all or of the best” (1129 b12-15).²⁷ The law prescribes conduct, it is the highest authority on matters relating to man’s behavior. As the first principle of character formation, the law informs those who fall under its dominion about proper and improper, virtue and vice. The correct response of the appetites and passions, as well as the proper activities of ethical virtue, are determined by what the law views as good or bad.

Aristotle admits, however, that the notion of law as the foundation of character formation is not without problems (1129 b24-26). For the law to properly form the dispositions of men, it itself must be properly formed. The law can only make good men if it is good. The good regime, that which has good laws, will provide the only basis from which truly good characters can be formed. Only when this occurs, when the laws of a regime are good, when the characters of men are properly formed, and when those characters provide the necessary condition for men to act virtuously, is justice rightly understood as complete or the whole of virtue. “And justice is perfect virtue because it is the practice of perfect virtue; and perfect in a special degree, because its possessors can practice his virtue towards others and not merely to himself; for there are many who can practice virtue in their own private affairs but cannot do so in their relations with another” (1129 b31-35).

The notion of justice as *the* virtue, the one virtue that encompasses all other virtues, answers our earlier questions. For a man to be ethically virtuous, he needed a starting point, one

²⁷I follow Ostwald’s translation of this phrase, as it better signifies what the discussion seems to be conveying. Ostwald, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 113.

that would help to form the proper character of his appetites and passions before he could actively do so himself. The starting point for character formation, according to Aristotle, is the law. The law defines man's actions, both with regard to himself and to others. In doing so, it instructs those under its influence in what is good and bad, proper and inappropriate. The law is the starting point of ethical virtue; the quality of the appetites and passions presuppose the pronouncements of the law. The complete practice of justice, embodied in the law, also helps to explain the duality of ethical virtue. Ethical virtue was both a necessary condition and proper activity of the obeying part of the soul. Justice as the comprehensive virtue accounts for this duality while making clear what it entails. The laws, as authoritative prescriptions, exist to provide the foundations for ethical virtue. They do so by establishing what is good and bad with regard to the appetites and passions and consequent behaviors. It also defines the virtuous activities of ethical virtue, the second aspect of the duality which furthers the habituation of the soul. The activities engaged in for the sake of ethical virtue involve not only our own souls, but our interaction with other souls. How we conduct ourselves in relation to other men is intimately related to the practice of ethical virtue. These interactions also fall under the pronouncements of the law, defining what is proper for human relations.²⁸ Thus, the entire practice of ethical virtue, from its foundations to its proper activities, is related to the essence of the law.

This notion of justice is problematic, however, for many of the same reasons that ethical virtue was insufficient. Ethical virtue presupposed a starting point, a source of authority that existed outside of itself. The complete practice of justice, as it is embodied in the law, was

²⁸Although men relate to one another in different ways, ways that have not yet been elaborated.

shown to be that starting point, providing pronouncements on all things proper and inappropriate. But as Aristotle himself has said, proper character formation and virtuous activities, at least in the initial stages, both depend on the intrinsic goodness of the laws (1129 b24-26). For both proper character development and interactive activities to occur, the laws themselves must be properly fashioned.²⁹ To suggest that the laws must be fashioned, however, presupposes that the law is a product of the act of legislation, an art that must choose what is good from what is not.³⁰ The act of fashioning laws, then, is an act that requires choice, one that will ultimately set the standard against which everything will define itself. This suggests that, just as ethical virtue had, justice (as the comprehensive virtue) points beyond itself. Justice too must have a starting point from which it takes its bearings, one that guides the act of legislation. Thus, the whole of justice and the law, like ethical virtue, must be understood as both a part and a whole. Both encompass the entire range of activities proper to its part, but both also point beyond themselves, requiring a higher principle to serve as their starting point.³¹ Our inquiry, then, must take a different path, one that will lead to both the starting point of justice and the standard for the art of legislation.

At this point the discussion has led us to an impasse. All of the previous things we sought pointed beyond themselves, requiring an external source of authority to define their essences. Even justice as the comprehensive virtue requires some foundation that can account

²⁹Thus, only in the good city can the good man and the good citizen be one and the same. Cf. *Politics*; Book three, Chapter four (1276 b30-35).

³⁰It also presupposes that the laws are not ordained from a higher source, such as divine revelation.

³¹It also suggests that each's respective good is ultimately defined in relation to something higher, instead of in relation to itself.

for its pronouncements. Aristotle suggests that the key to this dilemma lies in a reconsideration of what has gone before. Our discussion until now has focused on the first sense of justice, the sense in which it is complete virtue. In order to understand what justice and law point toward, we must consider justice in a second, more narrow sense (1130 b31-32). Our discussion requires that we reconsider justice, not as a whole or in a comprehensive sense, but in more particular, partial sense.

The notion of justice has shown itself to be a rather complex one. It can be thought of in at least two senses, with the first being the comprehensive or complete practice of ethical virtue. The first sense of complete virtue, however, is not self-sufficient. It requires a starting point upon which to base its proper dictates.³² To understand justice as a comprehensive virtue, we must step outside of justice, to examine whatever it is that provides it with its bearings. Curiously enough though, this step outside of justice requires us to divide justice, looking at a part instead of the whole. It requires us to examine a part of the comprehensive virtue, the part that deals with our relationships with others, “Particular justice on the other hand, . . . is divided into two kinds. One kind is exercised in the distribution of honors, wealth, and other divisible assets of the community, . . . the other kind is that which supplies a corrective principle in private transactions” (1130 b30 - 1131 a1).

In doing so, one begins to see Aristotle’s project taking shape. Previously, we examined ethical virtue and justice as wholes. The ambiguity we found was the result of needing first principles upon which directives could be based. The ambiguity was only realized, however,

³²It must be added that this starting point must not only be good, it must be the best, for we are searching for the best form of ethical virtue, and hence, the best form of justice.

when we saw that the ethically virtuous man (and thus the just man) ultimately needed initial character formation to both habituate his soul and guide his interactions with others. Aristotle seems to be showing us that the answer to our question, the foundations of both ethical virtue and justice as a whole, is to be found in our relationships with other men, and how those relationships must be judged.³³

The partial form of justice that our examination has taken up possesses two aspects: the just relationships of both equals and unequals with regard to different aspects of mutual relationships. All of the rules that govern men in their relations with other men can be categorized by taking into account what the relationship involves and whether or not it requires equality or inequality.³⁴ When the relationship involves honors and the sorts of things that go beyond business affairs, things to which the community itself is a party, Aristotle tells us that the exchange must be gauged by the merits of those competing for the good to be distributed (1131a24-32).³⁵ When the relationship involves private transactions where each party to the transaction is an equal, an equal sort of justice must be employed to define the transaction. The nature of transaction, then, defines the type of justice that will govern the relationship.

It seems that the reason we needed to examine partial justice to understand the whole of justice is because it makes clear how the laws will be framed and what form they will take. How man defines his relationships with his fellow men provides the framework from which the law is

³³This seems to emphasize a point only alluded to earlier, namely that true ethical virtue, even though it is ultimately a condition of one's soul, cannot be practiced fully in isolation.

³⁴This includes Aristotle's well known classification of proportional/distributive justice, corrective/rectifying justice, and reciprocal justice.

³⁵Although the merits themselves, or the way in which merit is assessed, takes different forms in different regimes.

made. And those relationships seem to be essential to the natures of both ethical virtue and justice, as neither can be determined by viewing man in isolation. Man's relationships with other men seem to be an essential part of human nature, one that must be accounted for if one is to understand justice, ethical virtue, living well, and happiness.³⁶ These two aspects of partial justice demonstrate the way in which man can interact with his fellow man, and how those interactions can be defined. Man must interact with his fellow man for many reasons, and the laws that flow from partial justice guide the many facets of human relationships. In this way, then, we can see the levels of human interaction through a proper understanding of partial justice.

The aspect of partial justice that deals with private transactions provides the grounds upon which man can fairly distribute and receive the goods he needs. These goods, because they are essential to man's survival, require a fair exchange that can be guaranteed and enforced. The aspect of partial justice that deals with private transaction, then, is the foundation for the political community; it provides the basis upon which man can ensure his existence, "The very existence of the state depends on proportionate reciprocity; for men demand that they shall be able to requite evil with evil . . . and to repay good with good - failing which, no exchange takes place, and it is exchange that binds them together" (1132 b34 - 1133 a3).³⁷ Likewise, the aspect of

³⁶From this one can see Aristotle's famous line that "man is by nature a political animal." Carnes Lord, *Politics*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1253 a3-4.

³⁷So too we see Aristotle beginning the *Politics* by saying "since we see that every city is some sort of partnership, and that every partnership is constituted for the sake of some good (for everyone does everything for the sake of what is held to be good), it is clear that all partnerships aim at some good, and that the partnership that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so particularly, and aims at the most authoritative good of all. This is what is called the city or the political partnership." Lord, *Politics*, 1252 a1-6.

partial justice that deals with the honors and things of the city that go beyond mere necessity provides the framework from which the community can begin the transition from mere survival to living well. Even though the allocation of honor can only occur once the conditions for survival have been met, the aim of living is not merely to live, but to live well. Thus, the two aspects of partial justice make clear the ways in which it is necessary for man to interact with his fellow man.³⁸ It is only through these interactions that one can understand the nature of the laws, and hence the foundation of both justice and ethical virtue.

This partial understanding of justice, particularly in its two constituent aspects, presents our discussion with its own set of problems. The law, and thus justice as a whole, regulates man with respect to both himself and his relations to other men. As the partial understanding of justice makes clear the ways in and for the sake of which man associates, it seems to set the parameters within which the law can and should be formed. Hence, Aristotle tells us that “political justice means justice as between free and actually or proportionately equal persons, living a common life for the purpose of satisfying needs” (1134 a26-29). But herein lies the issue. Man comes together in order to satisfy his needs, and in doing so, operates within the framework of the partial justice that pertains to private transactions. In doing so, he expects to be treated as an equal with his fellow men because he shares the same basic needs that they do. As the ends of the city are more than mere survival, however, man also seeks the good things,

³⁸Leo Strauss says of this interaction that “Each individual strives for happiness as he understands happiness. This striving, which is partly competitive with and partly cooperative with the strivings of everyone else, produces or constitutes a kind of web; that web is ‘society’ as distinguished from the ‘state’ which merely secures the conditions for the striving of the individuals.” Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 32.

things that contribute to his living well. The good things of the city must be allocated, and that allocation must follow the rules that govern the things that go beyond private business affairs. Precisely because they must be allocated, and because that allocation must follow rules, the implication becomes that the men who seek them do not necessarily have equal claims to them.³⁹ The laws must then deal with both equals and unequals, possibly with reference to the same men in different contexts making different claims. Thus, the law must make pronouncements on who deserves what good thing in what amounts. We have seen, however, that the law requires something else to inform its pronouncements, some higher form of authority. The art of legislation requires some higher science or knowledge that can inform its activity.

Yet again, then, Aristotle's discussion seems to be circular. We undertook an examination of partial justice in an attempt to understand the ways in which the laws had to be framed to bring about the whole of justice. In doing so, however, the discussion has only shown that laws point toward a tension in political reality, one in which all the good things and the claims to those good things must be weighed and assessed. Such an assessment seems to imply a higher art or science, some superior form of understanding that can inform the art of legislation. But Aristotle does not present us with such a science. Instead he ends the discussion by speaking about the soul, explaining justice within the soul as it relates to its proper ordering (and how that is to be understood) (1138 a3). This ending, while being otherwise un auspicious, may actually signal the key to our present dilemma. Our discussion has already seen that the proper ordering

³⁹One can assume that there are some men who have more appropriate claims to the good things, such as honor. We have already seen that the good things are in some way necessary conditions of the good life. The good life, because it is the highest way of life, would seem to deserve the good things more so than any other way of life. If this is so, however, there can never be true equality with respect to the allocation of good things.

of the soul, whereby the commanding part informs and guides the obeying part, constitutes the essence of perfect virtue. To understand this relationship, we have examined ethical virtue, justice as a whole, and the two aspects of partial justice. This examination left us with our current dilemma, the need for an overarching science, one that ultimately informs the art of legislation. By ending with this discussion of the soul, Aristotle seems to point out that the overarching science must be a science that takes proper account of the soul – in its proper ordering – as it applies to the different relationships of which man can find himself a part.

But what are we to make of this implication? Aristotle seems to suggest that politics, in its many manifestations, points beyond itself, toward an all-encompassing science of man. Partial justice, justice as the complete virtue, ethical virtue, and even perfect virtue appear to hang on this one supreme science, as it supplies the foundation upon which all of these things are built. And what of the overarching examination – the search for the good life? Is this overarching science the activity of living well, or is it simply another element like everything that has gone before. How is this all-important science to be properly understood?

If we take a moment to reflect, Aristotle may have already given us two previous clues that suggest an answer to our problem. First, Aristotle has discussed the nature of perfect virtue with reference to the proper ordering of the soul. In doing so, he made it clear that perfect virtue consisted in the commanding part of the soul informing and guiding the obeying part of the soul. To illustrate this, Aristotle went to great lengths to examine the virtue of the obeying part, particularly as it corresponds to ethical virtue, justice as a whole, and partial justice. What Aristotle has yet to do, however, is to demonstrate the virtue of the commanding part, the other half necessary for perfect virtue. It seems reasonable to think that this overarching science that

informs the art of legislation may have some relationship to the commanding part of the soul, especially given that one of the functions of the commanding part is to inform.

The second possible clue we have is to be found when our discussion earlier examined the absolute good. There Aristotle briefly discussed three comprehensive sciences that dealt with the different things good for man (1218 b10-15). These sciences included prudence, economics, and politics; presumably dealing respectively with the goods for oneself, for the household, and for the community. These comprehensive sciences seems to be the key to our dilemma, in so far as they deal with man in his relations to both himself and other men, particularly with regard to both the good and the necessary things. They also seem to relate to the way Aristotle presented the two aspects of partial justice. Economics, or the things of the household, appears related to the justice involved in private transactions, as it deals with the things necessary for life. Just as the justice of private transactions and allocation of good things were related to the function and activities of the city, so too do the sciences of economics and politics appear interconnected through their emphasis on the things of the city.⁴⁰ Moreover, the science of prudence seems related to both politics and economics in the same way partial justice was related to the whole of justice. In this way, then, it appears that Aristotle is still engaged in his now all too familiar technique of making something clear at the expense of something else. Our present discussion must now look for this overarching science of man, particularly as it relates to both perfect virtue and these three comprehensive sciences that seek to give an account of man in some particular

⁴⁰Although for the reasons related to what is necessary and proper for the existence of the city.

aspect of his existence. We must now move, according to Aristotle, to take up the issue of intellectual virtue.

CHAPTER IV: Intellectual Virtue

Our discussion up to this point has clarified many of the questions we originally sought to answer. Aristotle has shown us how the three properties of happiness relate to living well, and he has demonstrated, albeit in a rather abstract manner, what the good life entails. In doing so, however, he has raised a whole host of new questions, questions that require answers if the account of happiness and living well is to be complete. For example, we still have not yet been told what the absolute good is; that supreme end to which the good life is directed. The direction of Aristotle's discussion suggested that to understand the absolute good we first had to understand the perfect virtue of the soul. This led us to an examination of ethical virtue, one that made clear how the excellence of the obeying part of the soul could be gauged. Ethical virtue, in turn, necessarily pointed toward justice. The virtue of the obeying part of the soul needed an authority beyond itself to guide its actions, to serve as the foundation of its character formation. The discussion of justice illuminated the nature of ethical virtue, providing the principles upon which proper character formation could be achieved.

But as we have come to expect from Aristotle's discussion, the notion of justice itself required further explanation. The principles upon which ethical virtue is based comprise the essence of justice, but they are not themselves the product of justice. The first principles of action are a product of the art of legislation, one that seeks to regulate man in his various social capacities and interactions. To effectively evaluate this, however, requires that the legislator be able to judge the good things and the men who claim them. The art of legislation, then, also

requires a higher authority, one that can pass judgement on men and the things they seek.¹ Thus, Aristotle's discussion has pointed us toward the comprehensive science, that science which understands men both as they are and as they wish to be, particularly in relation to the things deemed to be good.² It is in light of this rather dense discussion that Aristotle points us once again to the soul, suggesting it is time now to examine the nature of thinking.³

Aristotle suggests that if we are to find the answers we seek, we must begin again by returning to the soul. Whereas we previously examined the appetites and passion, now the discussion must turn to the commanding part of the soul if we are to understand the comprehensive science that informs the art of legislation, justice, and ethical virtue. The commanding part of the soul, according to Aristotle, is possessed of two parts, the scientific part (gA4FJO: ` <46` <) and the calculative part (8` m4FJ 46` <) (1139 a12-13). The scientific part deals with "those things whose first principles are invariable," and the calculative part deals with "those things that admit of variation" (1139 a8-10). The commanding part of the soul as a whole, then, is concerned with contemplation as a whole. The things that it can contemplate differ, however, with respect to their natures. The object of thought, that which is to be contemplated, determines the part of the mind used to understand its nature. Aristotle tells us that

¹For a more comprehensive account of the art of legislation's limitations, and what those limitations point toward, see Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, pp. 28-29.

²This comprehensive science or knowledge would seem to understand the nature of all things, at least in so far as such an understanding can be beneficial to the soul of man and his happiness.

³This seems entirely consistent as the discussion has made clear ethical virtue (at both levels) requires choice, and choice is something more than habituated response. As ethical virtue is ultimately the excellence of obeying, one can fully understand obedience in light of that which commands.

the virtue of the mind as a whole is to be found in the respective virtue of each of these parts (1139 a16-18). Thus, to understand the virtue of the mind as a whole, the way in which it correctly contemplates all things, we must first begin by examining the excellences of each part.

The Mind

Aristotle tells us that the virtue of the scientific and calculative parts of the mind is defined by the distinctive activity that each engages in; “but the virtue of a faculty is related to the special function which that faculty performs” (1139 a17-18). In this way the mind resembles the appetites and passions, as virtue is related to the activities deemed proper to the part. Much like the appetites and passions, distinguishing the virtue of the mind requires understanding how the mind fits into the soul as a whole, and thus, what function it plays in the soul.⁴ The soul, as Aristotle explains, has three elements that “control action and the attainment of truth: namely, sensation, *mind* (< bH), and desire” (1139 a18-20).⁵ Action and truth, then, are the reference points of our examination; the activities dealing with action and truth are the keys to understanding the virtue of the mind as it relates to the virtue of the soul as a whole. And this procedure seems entirely reasonable on Aristotle’s part, for the dilemma we found ourselves in earlier with regard to ethical virtue and justice was ultimately the result of a need to ground the activities of ethical virtue in some higher form of authority. By pointing us back to the soul to begin our discussion of intellectual virtue, Aristotle has already made it clear that perfect virtue

⁴This is further emphasized by the fact that this whole discussion was undertaken to ascertain the nature of perfect virtue. The virtue of the intellect, as an element of perfect virtue as a whole, must fit within the activities of the soul.

⁵Note that I have altered Rackman’s translation so as to remain consistent with Aristotle’s word choice.

as a whole, and thus perfect goodness and happiness, requires that integration and dependency of both ethical and intellectual virtue.⁶

The virtue of the mind is in some way related to action and truth. As action must be controlled and truth must be obtained, the virtue of the intellect must be the activities it engages in to effect controlled action and attained truth. As we have seen, particularly with regard to action, effecting such outcomes is not within the sole power of the intellect. Controlling action and attaining truth are the products of cooperation between the different parts of the soul. Aristotle tells us that sense plays no role in controlling action, and desire has no bearing on the attainment of truth (1139 a20-23). Sense is specifically related to how the soul attains truth, and desire is a necessary part of how action is controlled. To understand the nature of things the soul must first receive some external input; attaining truth first requires being aware (perceiving) of things whose nature is unclear. Likewise, to be able to control action requires that the soul first desire to do something. The bridge between truth and action seems to lie in the third element of the soul, the mind (*νοῦς*), particularly in how the contributions of the senses and desires are able to be transformed into truth and controlled action.

This third element of the soul, the mind, seems to be the part that functions as the commanding part. It does so by bridging the gap between the senses and the desires, evaluating the input of the senses to attain truth, and providing the necessary guidance to the desires. In this way, then, we can see why earlier Aristotle divided the mind into the scientific and calculative parts. On the one hand, the scientific part of the mind dealt with things that could not be other

⁶One need only remember that Aristotle himself undertakes an explanation of intellectual virtue because the notion of ethical virtue (particularly the mean) requires it (1138 b18-34).

than the were, and as such, appears to fit perfectly with the sense element. The senses experience the external world as it presents itself, and the scientific part uses these experiences to then determine the truth of the things experienced. On the other hand, the calculative part dealt with the things that could be otherwise than they are, and its pairing with the desires seems equally appropriate. The desires can yearn for different things, and thus, can be at one time inclined toward some one thing, and at another time inclined to a different thing. It makes sense, then, why action needs to be controlled; the desires must properly be inclined toward the correct thing. To determine what the proper activity of the desires is requires stepping outside of the desires, to understand their nature, what they yearn for, and their proper function within the whole of which they are a part. The third element of the soul appears to be how our overarching question will ultimately be answered. To understand perfect virtue, perfect goodness, and the good life requires an understanding of how the soul, under the guidance of the mind, translates knowledge into action.

It seems clear that the reason Aristotle presented ethical virtue (and thus justice) as pointing toward intellectual virtue was because an adequate account of the proper formation of the appetites and passions required certain first principles. These first principles of conduct had to come from outside the appetites and passions, serving as the guiding principle of proper response and action. Even justice, as the comprehensive virtue, and the law required something higher, something that informed the most basic and fundamental act of justice – the art of legislation. Aristotle's argument, then, has been geared toward making clear that the soul is an organic whole. The human things – ethical and intellectual virtue, justice, law, legislation – are all things whose good can be determined only in relation to the soul. And precisely because the

soul in question is the human soul, the good of the human things requires understanding man on multiple levels and in different contexts. The mind, then, seems to be the key to solving all the previous questions that have come before. It is the mind that serves as the bridge between truth and action, determining what is correct and how that truth must manifest itself in action. The mating of the scientific and calculative parts of the mind match this function perfectly, providing the mechanisms whereby the soul can adequately perform this task.⁷ It remains for Aristotle to show, then, how it is that truth and action can be brought into a working harmony, one that ultimately brings about perfect virtue.

To demonstrate how the mind properly works, and hence the nature of intellectual virtue, requires our discussion to first examine the excellence of a single part.⁸ As we have arrived at our present point via the ethical virtues, it seems only reasonable that we begin with the part that deals with the desires. Aristotle tells us that “inasmuch as ethical virtue is a disposition of the soul in regard to choice, and choice is deliberate desire, it follows that, if the choice is to be good, both the principle must be true and the desire right, and that desire must pursue the same things as principle affirms” (1139 a23 - 27).⁹ The virtue of the calculative part of the mind, that part which deals with the desires and action, is inextricably linked with ethical virtue. The appetites and passions must be properly groomed, that is, they must be formed with reference to

⁷Although it must be admitted that, like every other example Aristotle has used to illustrate a facet of the soul, it is unlikely the mind can be reduced to the sum of its parts. For the mind to effectively serve as the bridge between truth and action, it must somehow transcend either science or calculation in such a way as to bring them into harmony.

⁸This too seems entirely consistent with the previous methods of examination.

⁹Note here that I have slightly altered Rackman’s translation to make it a little more literal.

their proper end. The desire forms the conditions within which the calculative part must work in order to affect the desired outcome. Only when the desires are properly groomed can the calculating part of the mind affect a good choice. When it does so, when the calculating part of the mind ascertains the right course of action to bring about the ends that the properly formed desires seek, the calculative part is deemed to be virtuous. The role of calculation, then, is to choose that which will best bring about the desired outcome; “now the cause of action (the efficient, not the final cause) is choice, and the cause of choice is desire and reasoning directed to some end” (1139 a32 - 34).

The calculating part of the mind is linked to action, then, through the medium of choice. To know what one particular thing amongst many one should choose, however, requires understanding choice has a function of both calculation and desire. “Hence choice necessarily involves both intellect *and* thought and a certain disposition of character [for doing well and the reverse in the sphere of action necessarily involve thought and character]” (1139 a32-35).¹⁰ The virtue of the calculating part of the mind is contingent on the ethical character of the desires. This seems to be consistent with what has gone before, for we have seen that one half of ethical virtue is to habituate the appetites and passions to respond properly to pleasures and pains. The other half of ethical virtue, the activities engaged in to both reinforce the habituation and bring about a higher end, are in the realm of action, and thus necessarily involves choice. The virtue of calculation, and thus one half of intellectual virtue, is to correctly choose the right means to bring about the prescribed ends.

¹⁰I add the italics here because Rackman’s use of ‘or’ insinuates an either/or proposition, one that is not necessarily present in the Greek.

Aristotle's account of the calculating part's virtue, while making clear how the relationship between ethical and intellectual virtue can begin to be understood, also raises two significant questions. First, Aristotle has not made it clear how the calculating part of the mind determines what means can correctly affect the desired end. If the virtue of the calculative part lies in its ability to choose correctly, then an adequate account of this virtue requires making clear what constitutes correctness with respect to choice. Presumably, such an account would have to specify how correctness is gauged, and thus, how truth is applied to action. This was one of the original reasons we undertook our present discussion, i.e., to make clear how the mind served as a bridge between truth and action. The direction of Aristotle's discussion suggested that clarity was to be found in the virtue of the parts. We have seen, however, that the calculative part's virtue is contingent on both a higher authority that determines truth, as well as the ultimate goodness of the ends that serve to habituate the appetites and passions.

These ends, the ones that constitute the first principles of action for the appetites and passions, point toward a second, more probing question. How is the goodness of these ends to be determined? This was the original question that made us look beyond the art of legislation, toward the mind and its virtues. But as the correctness of choice must be gauged within the rubric of these ends, how are the ends themselves to be evaluated?¹¹ If judging the ends that serve as first principles of action is also a function of the mind, it would have to be a function of the scientific part, the part that deals with things that do not admit of change. This suggests that ultimately there is an element of the human things that is unchanging and can serve as a guide.

¹¹Remember that the correctness of choice, and thus truth applied to action in a limited sense, signifies nothing more than ascertaining what means is appropriate to securing an already determined end. Correct choice is correct only in so far as it secures that which is desired.

Our introduction to the human things, however, showed us that they were precisely the opposite; they admitted of change and were therefore within the realm of the calculating part. Let us keep these questions in mind as we re-engage Aristotle's examination.

If choice is a function of calculation, operating within the sphere of desire, then the result of deliberative desire must be an informed action that seeks to bring about that which is sought. Choice, like so many other things we have already seen, has a certain dual nature. The ends within which choice operates are determined, a determination that also sets forth the foundation of ethical character. It is within this paradigm that the mind functions, applying half of itself to the affairs of the desires and their need for guidance. The symbiotic relationship between the mind and the desires, the commanding part and the obeying part, is made clear through the nature of choice. "Therefore, choice is either *the intellect* motivated by desire or desire operating through thought, and it is a combination of these two that man is a starting point of action" (1139 b4-7).¹² Man's psychology, then, is a complex mixture of modes of thinking and desirous inclinations. Aristotle again seems to anticipate our previous questions, recognizing that if there is to be perfect virtue, both the ends and the actions will need to be correct; "the attainment of truth is then the function of both the intellectual parts of the soul. Therefore their respective virtues are those dispositions which will best qualify them to attain truth" (1139 b12-14). The virtue of the mind as a whole, and thus the two lesser parts, is necessarily predicated on truth. Even though each deals with truth in a different way (the way in which it is ascertained or

¹²I follow Ostwald's translation here with the exception of the portion italicized, the substance of which is my own. Notice too the slight word shift Aristotle employs here. Choice is either the intellect (< bH) motivated by desire, or desire operating through thought (*4V< OJ 460). The significance of this, if any, remains to be seen.

appropriated), the respective elements of the mind find their virtue in some relation to truth.

Aristotle's insistence that we begin with the calculating part of the mind seems to have been for good reason. The virtue of proper calculation rests on something higher, on a truth that exist above the sphere of personal desire. Our quest for perfect virtue, via the virtue of the mind as a whole and calculation as a part, has necessarily led to the other half of the mind, that part which deals with truth exclusively.

By making clear the limitations of the calculating part's virtue, Aristotle suggests that there is more than one symbiotic relationship in the human soul. Just as the calculating part is necessarily related to the desires, so too is the scientific necessarily related to the calculating part. The relationship, as we have already seen, appears to be one analogous to a bridge; the mind as a whole serves to connect the truth ascertained by the senses to the reality experienced by the desires. And as we have already examined one-half of the mind, Aristotle points us toward a discussion of the second half, particularly as it relates to both its sister part and the mind as a whole. Interestingly enough, however, the discussion does not immediately proceed to take up the scientific part of the mind. Instead, much as he had with the calculative part, Aristotle suggests that we once again begin with the soul as a starting point. Precisely because both parts of the mind deal with truth in some way, the correct method of procedure is to begin with the different ways the soul deals with truth. If we are to determine the virtue of both the scientific part and the calculating part, we must first distinguish the different ways the soul ascertains truth, and then group them according to their respective part within the soul.

The virtue of the mind as a whole is inextricably linked to the virtue of its parts. The nature of Aristotle's discussion has suggested that the virtue of these parts is related to the ways

in which the soul deals with truth. These different modes of relating to truth must be explored if the virtues of the mind's parts are to be fully understood. To this end, Aristotle begins such an exploration by making clear the different ways the soul relates to truth; "let it be assumed that there are five qualities through which the *soul* achieves truth in affirmation or denial, namely art or technical skill, *science*, prudence, wisdom, and *mind*" (1139 b15-17).¹³ The soul, according to Aristotle, has five ways in which it specifically relates to truth. Seemingly true to form and in anticipation of our present examination's direction, Aristotle chooses to discuss these characteristics by beginning with scientific knowledge.¹⁴ The characteristic of the soul dealing with science, presumably the scientific part of the mind, is concerned with things that exist and cannot be other than they are; "an object of *science* therefore, exists of necessity. It is therefore eternal, for everything existing of absolute necessity is eternal; and what is eternal does not come into existence or perish" (1139 b20-23). Aristotle seems to rehash what has already been made clear, for we have seen that the scientific part of the mind deals with things that do not admit of change. The uniqueness of this discussion, however, appears to lie in its context.

Before, Aristotle described the characteristics of the scientific part in order to examine the mind. Here, the description of science is with a view to the soul as a whole, not to any individual part. It seems likely, then, that Aristotle means to differentiate between science in the

¹³Both Rackman and Ostwald choose to translate <` bH as intelligence, and Rackman renders gA4FJO: O as scientific knowledge. I prefer to render <` bH as mind and gA4FJO: O as science, seeing as in the former case Aristotle has been consistent with his word choice, and in the latter case the addition of the word knowledge may add a connotation not necessarily found in the Greek.

¹⁴Although this method changes the order in which he laid out the characteristics. Whether or not this is relevant remains to be seen.

soul and science in the mind for some particular reason. This reason appears related to an earlier distinction Aristotle made in reference to the soul. We were shown that the scientific part of the soul is related to the senses just as the calculating part of the soul is related to the desires. This distinction, when examined from our current perspective on the soul as a whole, begins to clarify the relevance of this particular discussion. It seems as though Aristotle intends to draw our attention to the senses, or more importantly, to the objects of the senses. The soul experiences eternal objects through the senses, objects that do not or can not admit of change.¹⁵ The truth of these experiences lies in their affirmation or negation, a process that is presumably the function of the scientific part of mind. As the virtue of the scientific part of the mind is defined by how well it performs its function, in this case how well it would affirm or deny what the senses experience, that affirmation or denial must correctly ascertain truth from the objects of the senses.

By returning us to the soul as a starting point, Aristotle has begun to show how we can understand the virtue of the scientific part of the mind, via the senses, as it relates to truth. But this discussion, as we have now come to expect, raises its own host of questions. How is it that the scientific part of the mind attains truth from the experiences of the soul's senses? Must not there be some existing truth upon which the judgment of experiences be based? If so, from where does this higher form of truth come?¹⁶ Moreover, what does it mean to ascertain truth

¹⁵The uniqueness of this discussion is almost immediately obvious, as it seems counter-intuitive that the objects of the senses are eternal. It stands to reason that the exact opposite should be true, that the objects of the senses are ever-changing, and hence, anything but eternal or of necessity. Let us keep this in mind as we see how Aristotle completes his present examination.

¹⁶Particularly if it is not a product of the senses or the desires.

from eternal and necessary objects? Are these objects of science not truth themselves, especially considering they are eternal and unchanging? These answers, according to the direction of Aristotle's discussion, are to be found by moving beyond science, beginning with an examination of art.

The second of the five characteristics whereby the soul achieves truth is art. Art, according to Aristotle, stands in distinction to science. Whereas science is the truth of things unchanging, art is in the class of thing that admit of change; "the class of things that admit of variation includes both things made and actions done" (1140 a1-2). Art is the characteristic of the soul that seeks to bring things into being by production, making things come into existence when they previously did not exist. It is the nature of art, then, to create, to bring into being that which does not exist of its own accord; "it follows that an art is the same thing as a rational quality, concerned with making, that reasons truly" (1140 a9-11). By directing his discussion in this manner, Aristotle sets science and art in opposition to one another. As where science was concerned with things that do not admit of change and was in the sphere of the scientific part of the mind, art deals with things that can vary, and is seemingly within the sphere of the calculating part of the mind.

Setting up this dichotomy, while making clear the nature of both science and art, only seems to obscure our discussion further. For if art deals only with the things that admit of change, the art of legislation, the unaccounted for master art whose nature first spurred this discussion, is no more clear than before. By setting up art in distinction to science, Aristotle has failed to show how the art of legislation can successfully bring into being the necessary pronouncements for man in his many capacities. The art of legislation needed some

comprehensive science or knowledge that would inform it; but as we have seen, such a science, as science, would stand apart and opposite from the art of legislation. Moreover, the art of legislation involves setting down the first principles of action upon which ethical virtue could be based. Art, as Aristotle suggests, is also distinguished from choice, which is a function of action, being different aspects within the sphere of calculation (1140 a17-19). Thus, the art of legislation must account for both science and choice, things which are alien to its nature.¹⁷

The answer to this dilemma, according to the direction of the discussion, is to examine the nature of choice. Having already explored both science and art, it seems altogether appropriate that Aristotle next takes up prudence, as both of the former seem intimately related to the latter. According to Aristotle, prudence is “a truth-attaining rational quality, concerned with action in relation to things that are good and bad for human beings” (1140 b6-8). Prudence, like art, exists within the sphere of calculation. It deals with the things that can be other than they are. Unlike art, however, prudence is not concerned with producing anything. The prudent man is concerned with action, and hence with choice, as it relates to the things needed to living well; “now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for

¹⁷At this point one could venture a haphazard answer to the present dilemma. The art of legislation, in order to produce good and effective laws of conduct, must take into account a number of things. The most important of these things appears to be understanding of what man is, what distinguishes him from other things, and how he conducts himself. The art of legislation, then, must account for man’s essential nature, that which man possesses as man in distinction to beasts. This essential nature, however, seems to be composite (as we have already seen). Thus, the art of legislation must deal with a unique sort of nature, a nature whose essence allows it the ability to change itself via the choices it makes. In this way, then, the uniqueness of the present issue becomes singularly apparent.

his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general” (1140 a25-29).

Prudence, then, is the characteristic of the soul whereby truth is mated to action and choice. It is a necessary aspect of living well, for happiness requires choosing distinguishing things are good from things that are bad. Aristotle tells us that not only is prudence a characteristic whereby the soul arrives at truth, it is also a virtue, being the excellence of the calculating part of the soul; “of the two part of the soul possessed of reason, prudence must be the virtue of one, namely, the one that forms opinions; for opinion deals with that which can vary, and so does prudence” (1140 b25-28). Prudence, then, has its own sort of duality; choosing well must involve both the ability to discern one’s own immediate good, and the larger good of which one finds oneself a part; “they possess a faculty of discerning what things are good for themselves and for mankind; and that is our conception of an expert in domestic economy (ἡ 46᾽ <᾽ : 46᾽ bH) or political science (A᾽ 84J 46᾽ bH) (1140 b9-11).¹⁸ Aristotle’s discussion of prudence, then, has begun to clarify our dilemma. Prudence, as the virtue of the calculating part of the soul, encompasses both art and the individual concern with one’s own good. While this appears at first glance to be an impossibility, as art and prudence were distinguished as making and choosing, a moment’s reflection shows how Aristotle’s account ultimately bears itself out.

¹⁸The more comprehensive form of prudence seems incorporate the three comprehensive sciences of man we saw earlier. This fits with the present direction of the discussion, but has not made clear the overall relationship between prudence, legislation, and the comprehensive sciences that led us to our present point.

The art of legislation, the quintessential art, must produce those laws which make the fundamental pronouncements about good and bad in every sphere of man's life. Production, and hence art, seems to require choice, however, for one must choose what one is going to produce and the manner in which it is to be produced. Thus, the cyclical duality that began with ethical virtue continues to be a factor even in our present discussion. The legislator must choose to legislate. When he does he engages in *the* art, the art of legislation, which produces the laws. Those laws serve as the fundamental guidelines for human action, habituating man's soul and providing guidance in his interactions with other men. Those actions are themselves matters of choice, but it is a contingent choice, one predicated on a preexisting art. Aristotle's discussion, then, has served to show the way in which choice and art, and hence justice, law, ethical virtue, and intellectual virtue may be synthesized. What Aristotle has not accounted for, however, is the way in which choice and art in the calculating part of the mind can appropriate the necessary truths contained in the scientific part of the mind. This seems now to be the all important question, as all of these increasingly interrelated pieces of the puzzle ultimately rest on some higher form of authority outside of themselves. Earlier Aristotle gave us a clue to how this dilemma would be resolved when he insinuated that the mind as a whole functions as a bridge between its scientific and calculating parts. It comes as no surprise, then, that Aristotle's next move is to direct the examination toward the mind.

The two aspects of the mind, the scientific and calculating parts, each provide a necessary function. The former deals with the truth of things that do not admit of change, the latter with those things that can vary. We have seen that, for the account that has gone before to make sense, Aristotle must show us how it is that the mind serves to bridge the gap between truth and

action. The answer, according to Aristotle, requires us to first reexamine science (1140 b31-33). Science, as a characteristic of the soul and a function of the scientific part of the mind, deals with things that are eternal and of necessity. These things are experienced via the senses, and science discerns the necessary truth that follows from those experiences. We noted previously, however, that there was a problem.¹⁹ Aristotle had not made it clear how the mind moves from the necessary things experienced by the senses to the truths derived from science; “consequently the first principles from which scientific truths are derived cannot themselves be reached by science; nor yet are they apprehended by art, nor by prudence” (1140 b33-35). By drawing our attention to this problem at this point in the discussion, Aristotle seems to acknowledge our readiness to understand the answer. It is the mind itself, above and beyond the scientific and calculative parts, that takes what the senses experience and puts form to it. Only the mind can affirm or deny what the senses experience. This truth that the mind comes to, a truth about the nature of the things experienced, serves as the basis from which all will proceed. The bridge that the mind provides, then, is to be found in the truths that it apprehends. “If then the qualities whereby we attain truth and are never led into falsehood, whether about things invariable or things variable, are *science*, prudence, wisdom, and *the mind*, and if the quality which enables us to apprehend first principles cannot be any one among three of these, . . . it remains that first principles must be apprehended by *the mind*” (1141 a3-9).²⁰

¹⁹Cf. footnote 13.

²⁰It may be useful at this point to consider a nuance in the translation. Both Rackman and Ostwald translate $\text{JT} < \text{VDPT} <$ as ‘first principles.’ While this is sufficient, it may be more appropriate to render it as ‘first things’ or ‘the things in the beginning.’ Doing so may save the reader from the possible connotations connected with ‘first principles,’ connotations that Aristotle himself may not have intended.

It seems, then, that we may have reached our answer. The truths of the mind, the nature of the things that exist by necessity, appear to provide the ever elusive bridge our examination has been seeking. For science to exist, and thus for the scientific part of the mind to function, the first things upon which it rests must be clearly and truthfully discerned.²¹ Likewise, for both choice and art to be correct, the truth against which it is measured must be made clear. The mind, as it discerns the true reality of the things that exist of necessity, provides the foundations upon which both science and prudence rest.²² But as is the case with every examination Aristotle has led us through, this one is not as concise as it first appears. It is true that the discussion has made it clear upon what both the scientific and calculating parts of the mind are founded. In this way, the mind acts as a bridge through the content of what it discerns. What is not clear, however, is how it does this. How it is that the unchanging truths discerned from the scientific part of the mind, which rests upon the truths attained by the mind itself, inform the varying nature of choice remains unclear. Thus, the fundamental question that drove us to consider the intellectual virtues remains: what is this comprehensive science or knowledge that informs the art of legislation? In what way is the mind as a whole capable of synthesizing science and

²¹Leo Strauss describes this well by say that “The ‘what is’ questions point to ‘essences,’ to ‘essential’ differences - to the fact that the whole consists of parts which are heterogeneous, not merely sensibly (like fire, art, water, and earth) but noetically: to understand the whole means to understand the ‘what’ of each of these parts, of these classes of beings, and how they are linked with one another. Such understanding cannot be the reduction of one heterogeneous class to others or to any cause or causes other than the class itself; the class, or the class character, is the cause *par excellence*.” Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, 19.

²²For a different perspective on this issue of the mind, cf. David Corey, “Voegelin and Aristotle on *Nous*: What is Noetic Political Science?” *The Review of Politics*, vol.64, Winter, 2002, pp. 57-79.

prudence in such a way as to transfer the truth of necessity into the reality of variation?²³ In order to answer this now all-important question, Aristotle directs us to a consideration of the fifth and final characteristic of the soul that deals with truth – wisdom.

Wisdom

Aristotle tell us that, in its more common usage, the term wisdom ($\text{F}^{\text{N4V}}<$) is employed to signify many things, including excellence in art (1141 a9-13).²⁴ In reality, wisdom is far more than an excellence in any one field; wisdom signifies an overall excellence that transcends any particular field. To this end, Aristotle tells us that “it is clear that wisdom must be the most perfect of the modes of *science*” (1141 a17-18). For a man to be wise, he must understand the nature of things, and how those natures manifest themselves, particularly with regard to one another. Wisdom, then, is the most perfect form of science because it surpasses all other sciences; it understands both what it is founded upon and what truths arise from the foundation: “the wise man therefore must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves” (1141 a17-19). Wisdom seems to be the key to our all-important dilemma. Our investigation showed us that science and prudence were related, with the latter’s choices requiring the former’s guidance. This relationship was supposedly mediated through the mind, whereby the truth of the necessary things could be translated into the reality of the varying things. What was not clear was how the mind accomplished this, how it translated truth into action. With this discussion of wisdom,

²³Cf. footnote 15.

²⁴It should not escape our notice that the examples Aristotle begins with contrast art and wisdom in general. This seems to fit our current dilemma exactly.

Aristotle seems to make clear the answer to our questions. It is wisdom that synthesizes the first things and what follows from them, translating a knowledge of natures into the logical implications that follow: “hence wisdom must be a combination of intelligence and science: it must be a consummated *science* of the most exalted objects” (1141 a19-21).²⁵

It comes as no surprise then that Aristotle immediately tells us wisdom must be higher than both prudence and political science (1141 a21-22). Our earlier discussion made it clear that politics, including justice, law, and the art of legislation, pointed beyond itself, toward a comprehensive science that could account for all things that fell within the political spectrum. This directed us to take up the intellectual virtues, where we saw that the mind was composed of two parts: the scientific and the calculative. The calculative part’s virtue was shown to be prudence, a characteristic of the soul whereby choice and action fell under the guidance of right reason. But this virtue also pointed beyond itself, toward a higher authority that could inform the function of calculation. Thus, we arrived at wisdom, the most exalted form of science that has knowledge of both first things and what follows from these first things. It appears, then, that our search for the comprehensive science that informs the art of legislation has ended. Wisdom ultimately informs the art of legislation, providing it with the nature and practice of the truth of all things that will fall within the scope of the law. The art of legislation is informed about the complex nature of man, how that nature both remains the same and changes, especially as it is influenced by the nature of other things, and how all of these things must be understood in relation to one another. With this insight, the art of legislation, the prudence that deals with the

²⁵Note here Rackman’s footnote *c*, as it seems to signify exactly what our discussion has observed.

whole of which man is a part, can make the correct choices about what laws need to be set down for producing a properly habituated ethical character.²⁶

Nor should we be surprised to see Aristotle use yet another example here, one that has now become quite familiar to us. At this point Aristotle reintroduces us to Anaxagoras, showing us why it is that this natural philosopher was deficient; “this is why people say that men like Anaxagoras and Thales may be wise but are not prudent, when they see them display ignorance of their own interests; and while admitting them to possess a knowledge that is rare, . . . they yet declare this knowledge to be useless, because these sages do not seek to know the things that are good for human beings” (1141 b4-9).²⁷ With this example, Aristotle brings us back to the beginning of our original inquiry. This entire discussion was undertaken to make clear what living well entailed, and how it corresponded to happiness. Earlier Aristotle told us that happiness was the activity of the perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue (1219 a28-29). This led us to a discussion of perfect virtue, which began by examining ethical virtue. We eventually came to realize that ethical virtue pointed beyond itself, toward something higher. Thus, we undertook an evaluation of intellectual virtue in an effort to see how the mind could provide the basis upon which ethical virtue was determined. The progression of our discussion, then, shows why it is that Anaxagoras is not truly wise; his knowledge was not true wisdom.

²⁶In his work on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristide Tessitore argues that prudence and wisdom make competing claims to be the most high, claims that are mutually exclusive. While this may be true of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it does not appear true for the *Eudemian Ethics*, based on the direction the discussion has taken thus far. Cf. Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle’s Ethics*, (New York: State University of New York Press), pp. 47-48.

²⁷The earlier example only seemed to hint at what Anaxagoras lacked; here Aristotle is explicit about the deficiency of Anaxagoras’s knowledge.

Instead, Anaxagoras sought knowledge of higher things without attempting to account for why his soul sought these things and what those things could tell him about his soul. Anaxagoras cannot be happy, and hence cannot live the highest way of life, because the activity of his way of life did not subsume all other activities and ways of life.²⁸

Interestingly enough, Aristotle's use of Anaxagoras also seems to fill a second, more important, role. By demonstrating perfect virtue as the synthesis of ethical and intellectual virtue, and then using Anaxagoras again to demonstrate the natural philosopher's deficiency with regard to the highest way of life, Aristotle also points us to the activity of the good life. Until now all we have seen is how perfect virtue requires an organic unity between the appetites and passions and the mind. This fulfills one-half of the definition of happiness; it makes clear what perfect virtue is. What Aristotle has not done is to show us what the activity of the perfect life is; what all encompassing activity, directed toward what supreme end, subsumes all other activities and ways of life.

If we take a moment to reflect, however, what becomes clear is that Anaxagoras signals the answer to this question we have sought since the beginning. Aristotle originally used Anaxagoras to make clear what the life of philosophy truly entailed. In this way, Anaxagoras was a negative example; Aristotle used him to show what philosophy was not. And Aristotle had previously given us his own definition of the life of philosophy, one that included both prudence

²⁸Alfarabi, when speaking of inadequate or deficient philosophers, says "The vain philosopher is he who learns the theoretical sciences, but without going any further and without being habituated to doing the acts considered virtuous by a certain religion or the generally accepted noble acts. Instead he follows his own inclination and appetites in everything, whatever they may happen to be." Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Muhsin Mahdi, trans., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 48.

and contemplation (1215b2).²⁹ Thus, Aristotle's use of Anaxagoras at this point, particularly because of the reason Aristotle criticizes him, suggests that the other half of happiness, the activity of the perfect life, has been found. Since it is ultimately through wisdom that the mind is able to bridge the gap between truth and action, the content of wisdom is the highest, more divine form of knowledge. But because life, particularly human life, is an activity, Aristotle suggests that one must seek out wisdom so as to be happy.³⁰ This activity, then, seems to be never-ending; wisdom is something we seek, but it is not something we will ever fully possess. The activity of the good life, then, the other half of the happiness puzzle, is the pursuit of wisdom as it concerns both contemplation and prudence.³¹

By providing us a full account of the intellectual virtues, as well as what appears to be a concise account of happiness and living well, Aristotle should have answered the questions that originally spurred the discussion. And this seems to be the case, for immediately after he explains wisdom, Aristotle turns his attention back to politics (1141 a21). By doing so, Aristotle reminds us of why we embarked on this phase of the discussion – to ascertain that which ultimately informs the political things. It is no surprise, then, that Aristotle concludes the chapter by discussing at length what it means to make sound political decisions, decisions whose

²⁹Note that at 1141 a26-27 Aristotle contrasts the word for contemplation (2gTD` b<) with prudence so as to make clear what wisdom is.

³⁰This conclusion is further augmented by the fact that, were wisdom obtained, so too would be happiness. The activity of the perfect life, a necessary component of living well, would cease as an activity, precisely because the end would have been achieved.

³¹Although he does not say it explicitly, one can presume that Aristotle means philosophy, particularly in the way he defined it. Let us, then, keep an eye on the discussion to see when and how he brings philosophy back into the examination, and what his procedure insinuates.

scope and grasp can now be properly understood (1141 b22 - 1145 a12).³² If this were all that needed to be said, however, it would seem reasonable to end the discussion here. But Aristotle does not end his discussion here. In fact, we seem to be a long way from the end of the discussion. What, then, are we to make of this? What has been left out of our examination of the good life and happiness that still remains to be said?

The answers to these questions seem to lie in a single curious statement with which Aristotle ends the chapter: “prudence does not use *wisdom* but makes the provisions to secure it. It issues commands to attain it, but it does not issue them to wisdom itself. To say the contrary would be like asserting that politics governs the gods, because it issues commands about everything in the state, including public worship” (1145 a7-12).³³ This statement, while seemingly harmless, introduces an angle to our discussion that we have not yet considered. Aristotle has led us through an examination of the good life, one that was largely theoretical and predicated on man in the abstract. By asserting that it is the gods who govern politics, especially right after he has asserted the authority of wisdom over prudence, Aristotle seems to point out the difficulty of putting our theoretical account into practice. Whereas our discussion has shown how the good life was ultimately a synthesis of the ethical and intellectual virtues, Aristotle

³²Note that there is also a side discussion that takes place at 1144 a23-38 which seems to indirectly emphasize this point quite well. Aristotle draws our attention to the notion of ‘cleverness,’ seemingly in an effort to further accentuate the interconnectedness of wisdom and prudence. Cleverness is a part of prudence, a part that can be good or bad. Its goodness is not the result of wisdom, however, but of ethical virtue: “But that eye of the soul of which we spoke cannot acquire the quality of prudence without possessing virtue” (1144 a11-13). Thus, wisdom cannot properly translate truth into action without first having ethical virtue. By differentiating cleverness from knavery with reference to virtue, Aristotle makes clear the importance of both aspects of perfect virtue, particularly as they relate to one another.

³³Ostwald, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp., 172-173.

points out that, in reality, life is not determined by such a synthesis. The art of legislation practiced in the real world of politics, that art which makes pronouncements about man in all spheres of his life, is not informed by wisdom or any intellectual virtues. The foundations of justice, and thus, ethical virtue, lie in the pronouncements of the gods. And this seems to make sense, for if it were the way we had seen in our discussion, the philosopher would be the ruler and creator of the city. But why then has Aristotle done this, putting us through an abstract discussion that has no bearing on the real world? While an answer to this question cannot be attained with any great certainty, an answer can be ventured based on what we have learned through Aristotle's own teaching.

First, the notion of ethical virtue only makes sense in relation to something higher, something that informs its first principles of action. While the pronouncements of the gods offer such an authority, they cannot be understood as happiness proper. Living well requires perfect virtue, and perfect virtue requires both ethical and intellectual virtue. Only when both the appetites and passions and the mind are fully actualized is perfect virtue a possibility.³⁴ The pronouncements of the gods, then, cannot serve as the highest authority for the happy man; he must be able to do what is good because he, of his own accord, understands why what he does is good. From this point of view, the happy man, he who pursues the activity of the perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue, is also at odds with the city. Thus, a second reason Aristotle

³⁴Eric Voegelin says of this possibility that "The *spoudaios* is the man who has maximally actualized the potentialities of human nature, who has formed his character into habitual actualization of the dianoetic and ethical virtues, the man who at the fullest of his development is capable of the *bios theoretikos*. Hence, the science of ethics in the Aristotelian sense is a type study of the *spoudaios*." Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 64.

seemingly saw fit to lead us in this discussion was to make clear that perfect virtue will be in a tension with the city.³⁵ We saw earlier that the truly happy man would be rare, and the reason for this now seems clear. To be happy requires stepping outside of one's context, one's cave so to speak, and moving beyond that which the city deems to be good with a view to what is truly good. The truly happy man and the citizen, then, differ in this respect: whereas the citizen takes his bearings from the laws, and ultimately from the gods, the happy man is happy because of his wisdom, wisdom predicated first and foremost on his nature.

Aristotle's conclusion of the intellectual virtue examination seems to signal the inevitable tension between what is true absolutely, and what will be true in practice. This tension possesses its own set of problems, however, problems that will test how happy a perfectly virtuous man can really be. One must also wonder how the happy man will become happy, since the laws of a city will never be in accordance with wisdom.³⁶ Aristotle suggests that the answers to all of these question are to be found by starting a new examination, one that takes up the notion of friendship.

³⁵More than likely this also means perfect virtue, and thus true happiness, will always be in tension with the pronouncements of the gods, and thus, with religion as a whole.

³⁶We have seen this problem before, but it takes on new prominence given the preceding discussion.

CHAPTER V: Friendship and Philosophy

The tension that culminated the discussion of the intellectual virtues serves as the contextual basis from which Aristotle begins the examination of friendship. Taking our bearings from the direction of the discussion, we see the tension existing between the perfectly virtuous man and the city can only be understood, if not resolved, by examining friendship. But this is something of a curious procedure on Aristotle's part, seeing as the art of legislation, that which sets the standards against which all human action is measured, was shown to be informed by one of two things, neither of which were friendship. Either the ultimate pursuit of wisdom, which attempts to ascertain truth and deduce what follows from that truth, or the pronouncements of the gods, serve to inform the art of legislation, that primary action which will provide the first principles of all subsequent action. To resolve this tension would seemingly require an examination of the city, not with a view to its accidental attributes, but in light of its proper end. Only when the nature of the city is properly understood can this fledgling tension between reason and revelation be resolved. To this end, we should expect to see Aristotle engage in an examination of the city at this point, one that seeks to understand it by examining why and for what purpose it exists.

It is much to our surprise, then, that such an examination, according to Aristotle, must necessarily begin from the point of view of friendship. It is in the analogy between friendship and the city that the end of the art of legislation comes to light; "for to promote friendship is thought to be the special task of the art of government; and people say that it is on this account that goodness is a valuable thing, . . . furthermore we all say that justice and injustice are chiefly displayed towards friends; it is thought that a good man is a friendly man, and that friendship is a

state of ethical character . . .” (1234 b23-28). The city, as we saw when we examined justice, has a nature that parallels man’s in many ways. It exists to secure the basic conditions of life; man comes to live with other men in order to procure the basic necessities of life. The city is then self-sufficient, and only in the city can man acquire all the things necessary to live. The city also exists for a higher reason, apart from being the medium through which men can secure the basic necessities of life. It is through the city, which is to say through his relations with other men, that man can also seek the means to living well. The end of the city, then, is not merely to live, but to live well. And as living well is the vehicle whereby man attains happiness, the ultimate end of the city is to promote the good life. The city, then, is truly self-sufficient; only in the city can both the necessary conditions and proper activities of the good life be had.¹ By making this analogy between friendship and the city, Aristotle suggests a certain social prerequisite to the good life, one that must be understood before our examination of happiness can be complete.²

Friendship and the City

If the city is to fully promote the good life, it must foster friendship amongst its citizens. This means that the art of legislation must account for both the necessary and proper relations of men, relations that must be informed correctly if the citizens are to be friends. Much like justice, however, the nature of friendship is characterized by a multiplicity of form. We previously saw

¹This suggests that the forms of partial justice we have already examined are either forms of friendship, or analogous in some way to friendship.

²Although at first glance this may appear odd, especially given the solitary nature of the discussion up to this point, the direction the discussion now takes seems entirely appropriate when one takes into account man’s social nature, one that has already been established.

that justice must be understood both in terms of the whole of virtue, and in terms of its partial aspects. This duality of justice suggested a nature that pertained to the individual soul and the state of its disposition, as well as to that soul's interaction with other souls. These interactions took different forms depending on the nature of the relationship. Friendship, like justice, also exists in different forms, forms that are contingent upon what the friendship is based. But this is one of the unique problems with which the art of legislation must deal, for the first principles of action to be laid out by the law must take into account the multiple aspects of friendship's nature. If the city is to correctly promote friendship, and the laws are to properly outline the ways in which different types of friends are to interact, then the art of legislation must be informed about the true nature of friendship and the ways in which that nature manifests itself.³

Aristotle suggests that our examination of friendship must begin by recognizing that there are many opinions that claim to know what true friendship is. Friendship is held to be a good by most, if not all, men, and as such, there is wide disagreement over what constitutes a real friend (1234 b32-33). This is so because it is not clear if a true friend is someone who is opposite in nature to us, similar in nature to us, useful to us, easily acquired, or loyal (1235a5-1235 b13). Moreover, a friend is someone we hold dear. To hold someone to be dear, however, is equally as problematic as the nature of a true friend, according to Aristotle, because it is unclear what is

³If the art of legislation must be informed about the nature of friendship in order to make laws for the city, then our examination of friendship will seemingly serve to accomplish in practice what Aristotle only outlined in theory when he discussed the intellectual virtues. Our examination, an activity whereby we seek the nature of a thing (friendship) and the truth that follows from that nature, seems to fit perfectly with what Aristotle earlier suggested was the proper pursuit of wisdom. Thus, Aristotle seems intent on making his readers engage in the comprehensive science that informs the art of legislation via an examination of friendship. One must wonder in what way Aristotle's intentions here relate to what he will ultimately say about friendship.

dear to us. What we hold dear can be either what we desire, which is pleasant, or what we wish, which is good (1235 b19-24).⁴ By first introducing these two problematic aspects of friendship, Aristotle has begun our examination on a somewhat cautionary note. Much like so many other things we have already examined, friendship appears to have something of a dualistic nature. By first making clear the problems inherent in the opinions on friendship, Aristotle has subtly pointed us toward the nature of friendship, one that has both an external and internal aspect.

On the one hand, what type of man one takes as a friend is an issue that points toward an external aspect of friendship, an issue that deals with one man's relationship to another. In this way the external aspect of friendship resembles partial justice; it is a question of the way men should act toward one another. On the other hand, what we hold dear points toward an internal aspect of friendship, as it is predicated on what the soul deems to be most valuable. The question of what is most dear, then, resembles our discussion of justice as the complete virtue. Earlier we saw that the soul will respond to pleasure and pain in the correct manner only when it has been properly habituated. The character of the appetites and passions, then, can respond in ways that are more or less correct. So too it seems with what the soul holds to be dear; whether the soul should hold dear the pleasant or the good is an issue of what is proper, and must be discerned if the true nature of friendship is to be understood. Thus, by beginning the examination with two very specific problems inherent in the nature of friendship, Aristotle has quietly shown how the analogy between friendship and the city reveals the key to how the city can promote friendship.

⁴This is the first time in the *Eudemian Ethics* that Aristotle uses the word love (gDTH), which Rackman renders as desire. Its inclusion at this point seems to be of some importance, yet its relevance remains uncertain.

Having now set up the problems to be dealt with, Aristotle proceeds with his discussion by providing us with a starting point; “the thing desired and wished is either the good or the apparent good. Therefore also the pleasant is desired, for it is an apparent good . . .” (1235 b26-28).⁵ This new starting point suggests that the previously stated question was somehow insufficient. Instead of being a choice between the good and the pleasant, what the soul holds to be dear is now a choice between what is good and what only seems to be good. As we have previously seen, if a choice is to be good, it must be correct, that is, informed by the truth of the thing in question. The soul must hold dear what actually is good, a choice that requires deciding between many things, all of which claim to be good.⁶ The question that prefigures this examination, whom the soul should hold to be dear, can only be understood by evaluating for what the soul should properly desire and wish.

Aristotle anticipates this dilemma by giving us another initial assumption: “things good are some of them absolutely good, others good for someone but not good absolutely; and the same things are absolutely good and absolutely pleasant” (1235 b32-34). This second assumption we must account for shows how the previous dilemma is to be settled. In order for the things that the soul holds dear to be assessed, they must be measured against this scale that differentiates between absolutely good and respectively good.⁷ With these two assumptions in

⁵It should be noted that Aristotle is proceeding with his examination by taking up the issues in the opposite order in which he presented them. The direction of his discussion seems to suggest that once again we will find our answer by examining the soul.

⁶Although Aristotle argument already insinuates that what is pleasant in itself is probably not in competition for being the good chosen, as it is only an apparent good.

⁷Remember that the good that we are seeking here is what type of man we should hold dear.

place, Aristotle has shown us how the external and internal aspects of friendship are to be bridged. The type of man that we choose as our friend, whether he is opposite or alike, loyal or pleasant, is a decision that must be made with respect to our soul. We choose a friend based on our desire for a friend, and this desire is predicated on the internal aspect of friendship, namely what we hold to be dear. Aristotle's two assumptions, then, suggest that the needs of the soul, what it desires in terms of human relations, must be evaluated with regard to those relations which are absolutely good. Thus, to determine which friendship is absolutely good, that which will set the standard against which all others will be measured, we must first determine how the different types of friends relate to the soul: "we may choose a thing and love it for each of these reasons, so also in the case of a human being, one man we love because of his character, and for *virtue*, another because he is serviceable and useful, another because he is pleasant, and for pleasure" (1236 a11-14).⁸

Determining how the different types of friends relate to the soul in order to discern which type is the best, however, is not a process whose activity is self-evident. Instead, it requires some starting point from which the examination can begin. Aristotle provides us with such a starting point, suggesting that we must begin the examination with an initial definition: "and a man becomes a friend when while receiving affection he returns it, and when he and the other are in some way aware of this" (1236 a14-15). A friend is another human being for whom we consciously have affection, and, in turn, has affection for us. The basic starting point of

⁸It stands to reason from what has been said that friendship and the city are also related through the laws, because the laws (and hence the art of legislation) will presumably make pronouncements about what type of friend is best with respect to the soul. The laws, then, through their habituating influence, will form the soul's first preferences for the type of friend it holds to be dear.

friendship, then, is conscious affection for another human being, an affection that is the product of what our desires hold dear. This affection, according to Aristotle, can take one of three basic forms: virtue, utility, and pleasure (1236 a32-33). All of the types of friendship that Aristotle listed earlier, the types garnered from opinions about friendship, are ultimately reducible to three rather specific categories. The reason for all this confusion about what constitutes a real friend is to be found in the nature of the thing itself. As Aristotle tells us, there is something primary about friendship, this conscious affection for another that is, in turn, reciprocated. But how that affection manifests itself, in one of the three categories of friendship, may or may not possess all of the primary characteristics. The confusion about the nature of friendship, then, is the result of attempting to universalize one particular form of friendship without examining if that form possesses the requisite characteristics of the primary. “Therefore in every case people seek the primary, and because the universal is primary they assume that also the primary is universal; but this is untrue. Hence in the case of friendship, they cannot take account of all the observed facts” (1236 a23-28).

What is primary about friendship, the conscious affection for another human being that is reciprocated, is the standard against which our examination can gauge the three types of friendship. Aristotle tells us that of the three, the friendship based on utility is by far the most common: “of these the one based on utility is assuredly the friendship of most people; for they love one another because they are useful . . .” (1236 a33-35). What the soul holds dear is most often what it finds of use. The friendship of most men, then, is the result of their need for one

another, their conscious desire for what will be useful to their soul.⁹ In distinction to the friendship based on utility, Aristotle tells us that the second type of friendship, that of pleasure, is primarily the choice of the young and passionate; “on the other hand friendship based on pleasure is the friendship of the young, for they are sensitive to what is pleasant” (1236 a38-40). These first two types of friendship, the ones based on utility and pleasure, fulfill the part of the primary standard that calls for conscious affection for another. Although for different reasons, out of usefulness in the friendship of utility and out of pleasure in the friendship of pleasure, both forms display a conscious affection for the other they hold dear. They do not, however, fully represent what is primary about friendship. What is primary about friendship requires that the conscious affection that one has for another be mutually reciprocated. The friendships of utility and pleasure are concerned only with the affection of one-half of the pair. By making clear the deficiencies of the first two types of friendship with regard to what is primary about friendship, Aristotle points us to the third, most complete form of friendship, i.e. that of virtue.

“It is clear from this that the primary friendship, that of the good, is mutual reciprocity of affection and purpose. For the object of affection is dear to the giver of it, but also the giver of affection is himself dear to the object” (1236 b2-5). The only form of friendship that completely possess what is primary about friendship is the friendship based on virtue. It is a completely whole relationship, one where each party to the friendship is both the lover and the object loved. In this way, then, the friendship based on virtue is the best form of friendship available to man because it is the most pure. Both parties to the friendship find the other desirable, and thus each

⁹This seems appropriate, seeing as men first come together in the city to secure their basic self-sufficiency, and thus, to procure what is of use to them.

renders conscious affection for the other. The tension between the apparent good and the absolute good with relation to what the soul desires is also resolved in the friendship based on virtue, for Aristotle tells us that “since the same thing is absolutely good and absolutely pleasant at the same time if nothing interferes, and the true friend and friend absolutely is the primary friend, and such is a friend chosen in and for himself (and he must necessarily be such, for he for whom one wishes good for his own sake must necessarily be desirable for his own sake), a true friend is also absolutely pleasant” (1236 b27-33). Only in the friendship based on virtue is the person for whom the soul desires both absolutely good and absolutely pleasant. Thus, by examining what was primary about friendship, Aristotle has shown us that only in the fullest, most complete form of friendship, that based on virtue, is the resolution of the tension between what the soul wishes and what it desires to be found.

In showing us that the friendship based on virtue is the key to synthesizing the absolute good and the pleasant, Aristotle has solved one of the original questions that pertained to the initial assumption upon which our examination was based. What the soul holds dear in terms of a friend is at the same time both absolutely good and absolutely pleasant when the friendship is one based on virtue. But this first assumption we made was followed by an equally important second assumption, one that presented its own dilemma to be resolved. Aristotle has not yet answered this question that followed from the second assumption we made, namely, how the tension between the good of one's own soul and the absolute good can be resolved. The resolution of this tension, according to Aristotle, is to be found by once again looking to the starting point of our examination, toward the necessary relationship between friendship and the city.

We have seen that friendship and the city are related because the city is the culmination of men's need for one another. As such, the ultimate end of the city is to promote living well, and this necessarily entails friendship, the forms of which differentiate the ways in which man needs his fellow citizens. The city, then, must actively take an interest in the amiable relations of its citizens, and the art of legislation must do what it can to cultivate friendship by the pronouncements it makes. To do so the art of legislation needed to understand the nature of friendship; how it is to be understood both in terms of men's relations with one another, and in relation to what the soul desires. By differentiating the types of friendships into three categories and then showing how they relate to one another, Aristotle made clear the external aspect of friendship's nature and how the manifestations of those external relationships can be measured. In doing so, he pointed us inward, toward the soul and what it holds dear. It is here, then, with the discussion remaining at the standpoint of the soul, that Aristotle takes up the internal aspect of friendship, suggesting that the potential tension between the soul's own good and the absolute good can both be understood and resolved within the city: "for the absolute good is absolutely desirable, but what is good for oneself is desirable for oneself; and the two ought to come into agreement. This is effected by virtue; and the purpose of political science is to bring it about in cases where it does not yet exist" (1237 a1-3).

It is in the city that true human friendship is promoted effectually, by attempting to make the good of an individual soul identical to the absolute good. It is the goal of the art of legislation, if it wants to bring about friendship amongst its citizens, to make pronouncements whereby the soul's of the citizens are habituated to desire the absolute good; "and one who is a human being is well adapted to this and on the way to it (for by nature things that are absolutely

good are good to him), . . . but the road is through pleasure - it is necessary that fine things shall be pleasant”(1237 a3-7). The art of legislation, then, has two interrelated goals: to establish the first principles of action in the form of laws, and to promote friendship among the citizens.¹⁰ In this way, the art of legislation must provide the foundation upon which the proper habituation necessary for both ethical virtue and friendship will be based.¹¹

It seems, then, that Aristotle’s discussion of friendship, up to this point, has, in large part, been an attempt to show us the relationship that exists amongst all that has gone before. Friendship was related to the city in precisely the same way ethical virtue was related to the laws. Both take their initial bearings from the laws of the city, and hence, from the art of legislation. And both are concerned with the soul, as it relates to individual excellence and external relationships. Friendship is the way in which the soul relates to other souls, the goodness of which can only be known by understanding the soul on its own terms, and then in relation to others. It is in the true form of friendship, the friendship of virtue, that the highest forms of social interaction can take place, and thus man’s full social nature can be actualized. It

¹⁰Leo Strauss, speaking of this relationship, says “Political activity is then properly directed if it is directed toward human perfection or virtue. The city has therefore ultimately no other end than the individual. The morality of civil society or of the state is the same as the morality of the individual.” Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 134.

¹¹It is also interesting that both ethical virtue and friendship have dualities in their natures that are almost identical. On the one hand, the part of ethical virtue that deals with the soul (the whole of virtue) is remarkably similar to the internal aspect of friendship that deals with what the soul holds to be good. Both are informed by the art of legislation because their first principles are laid down in the pronouncements of the law. On the other hand, the part of ethical virtue that deals with the outward activities of the soul in relation to other men parallels the external aspect of friendship that is concerned with types of friendships. What this similarity means, particularly in terms of happiness, remains to be seen.

is also in this highest form of friendship that we see the highest form of activity in which man as a social animal can engage. The activity of the highest form of friendship, whereby the soul holds as its own good the sort of man who is both absolutely good and absolutely pleasant, is the activity of the fully social being. The activities of the virtuous friendship, then, actualize man's full social nature; only in the virtuous friendship is the right man chosen to be a friend for the right reason: "and if active affection is the reciprocal choice, accompanied by pleasure, of one another's acquaintance, it is clear that friendship of the primary kind is in general the reciprocal choice of the things absolutely good and pleasant because they are good and pleasant; and friendship itself is a state from which such choice arises" (1237 a30-35).

Having given a seemingly thorough account of the relationship between friendship and the city, it would be reasonable for Aristotle to end his treatise here. We have seen through the course of our examination the ways in which the soul can be fully actualized, beginning with the individual excellence of the desires and the mind as they culminate in perfect virtue, and now ending in friendship as the culmination of man's social nature. It stands to reason that our discussion should be complete, having shown how man can achieve happiness through the perfection of both his soul and his activities, particularly as those activities relate to others. But interestingly enough, Aristotle is not content to finish his discussion at this point. We as his students have yet to understand something that is fundamental if we are to fully comprehend the nature of happiness and living well.

This last piece of our examination, then, must lie in what Aristotle has failed to answer, not in what he has already demonstrated. And a moment's reflection reminds us that there are three crucial questions for which we have not yet accounted. First, the tension between the truly

happy man and the city, or more importantly, the gods of the city, has not yet been resolved. We looked to the nature of the city, and thus to friendship, to find our answer to this tension, but the examination has yet to provide us with any specific resolution. Second, Aristotle has not made it fully clear why it is that the perfectly happy man needs a friend at all. In suggesting that friendship is necessary to fully actualize man's social nature, Aristotle has included another element to the happy life, one that has no apparent relationship to the activity that pursues wisdom. The activity of friendship would seem to detract from the pursuit of wisdom, which was earlier understood to be the activity of perfect virtue, in so far as it would keep the happy man from his proper function. Finally, when he differentiated the types of friendship, Aristotle refused to reject the friendships based on utility and pleasure as being real friendships. Although they were not the primary form, Aristotle still maintained that they were friendships nonetheless. One has to wonder why it is that Aristotle maintains utility and pleasure as forms of friendship when they clearly deviate from the primary form. Let these questions remain in the background as we re-engage the discussion.

Upon re-engaging the discussion, what we find is that Aristotle seems to recognize the tension between the virtuous friendship and the friendships based on utility and pleasure. The former is clearly superior, in that it fully embodies what is primary about friendship. The latter two, however, are also important factors in our discussion, factors that tell us something about friendship or the city that is not yet obvious. Aristotle suggests that in order to fully understand both friendship and the city, we must also consider the lesser types of friendship and what their natures add to our examination. To this end, Aristotle tells us to look at friendship from a different perspective, one that splits friendship into two types instead of the three categories we

previously saw: “these then are three kinds of friendship; and in all of these the term friendship in a manner indicates equality, for even with those who are friends on the ground of *virtue* the friendship is in a manner based on equality of virtue. But another variety of these kinds is a friendship on a basis of superiority” (1238 b18-21). Man’s social nature is more complex than our previous discussion revealed, and the three broad categories of friendship we used earlier are insufficient to account for the complexity. There is an element in man’s social interactions that admits of an unequal footing between the participants. The nature of friendship, if it is to be properly understood, must account for these interactions that admit of the superiority of one of the parties to the relationship.

Aristotle proceeds to explain that “in these varieties either there is no return of affection or it is not returned in a similar way” (1238 b26-28). This new type of friendship, the one that we must account for if we are to properly understand both friendship and the city, seems to be the final link in man’s social nature. The other forms of friendship dealt with man as he related to other men for whom he had affection. This second type of friendship, the one that admits of superiority, deals with man as he relates to other men for whom he may not have any feelings. The addition of this second type of friendship, then, seems to account for all the possible ways in which man can interact with other men, spelling out the complexities of man’s social nature. In this way, the addition of the second type of friendship also appears to make the relationship between the nature of friendship and the nature of the city a little clearer. The city exists on many levels, from basic self-security to living well. In doing so, it must account for the many ways in which men interact, an account that clearly differentiates how those interaction can be understood. The second type of friendship helps the city to account for men’s interactions that

are not based on reciprocated affection or equality, interactions that help to form the self-sufficiency that is the city.¹² By directing the examination toward this second type of friendship, Aristotle has forced the discussion to account for all the relations that occur within the realm of the city.

With the addition of this second type, Aristotle's account now comprises six different forms that friendship can take; "there being then, as has been said, three kinds of friendship, based on *virtue*, utility, and pleasantness, these are again divided in two, one set being on the footing of equality and the other on one of superiority" (1239 a1-4). These six forms are the ways in which man can exist as a social animal; they account for the sum total of all his social relations. It is clear now why Aristotle did not end his treatise earlier. His examination of friendship had not accounted for all the possible ways man can relate to his fellow man socially. The discussion, had it ended earlier, would not have given us a complete account of the nature of friendship, and thus, it would not have properly informed us about the nature of the city. In this way, then, Aristotle has answered the third question the discussion had earlier prompted us to ask. The reason Aristotle maintained that the friendships of utility and pleasure were actual types of friendship, in spite of their inconsistency with the primary form, was to show us the complexity of human relationships. Thus, by not excluding all but one form from the discussion of friendship's nature, Aristotle was able to offer a much fuller account of friendship, particularly in how it elucidates the nature of the city.

This procedure, however, raises its own set of dilemmas. By presenting it as having six

¹²This second type of friendship would seemingly help to account for all political relationships, particularly those of ruler to ruled, as opposed to the friendship based on equality, which accounts for the relationships between citizens.

possible forms, Aristotle made it clear how the nature of friendship could account for the many complex relationships that develop within the city. But in doing so, Aristotle also transferred the tension that previously existed between the forms of friends onto the now highly differentiated types of friends. If it was previously unclear how a friendship of utility or pleasure was anything like a friendship based on virtue, it is now certainly unclear how a friendship based on superiority is anything like a friendship based on equality.¹³ In what way does a man who is superior to other men qualify as a friend to any lesser man, except by a stretch of the word or through an ill-fitted analogy? And this problem, in some sense, amplifies the importance of the two other questions we previously asked. It is not yet clear if, and if so why, it is that the perfectly virtuous and happy man has any need for a friend.¹⁴ And because of the rarity of such men, is it not the case that the friendships available to him will necessarily be ones based on his superiority, ones for which he should have no need?¹⁵ Aristotle's discussion of the multiple types of friendship, then, has brought on a whole host of problematic dilemmas, ones that do more to obscure our examination than clarify it. As we have seen him do on so many previous occasions, however, Aristotle seems to have directed the discussion in such a way as to make it problematic for our benefit. Presumably this was done on his part as a way to make us see something that was vital to our understanding of the subject matter. It is no surprise, then, that

¹³Aristotle himself seems aware of this tension that exists, particularly between the friends based on superiority. Cf. 1239 a5-9, and again at 1239 a21-32.

¹⁴To say nothing of the overarching question that prompted this discussion in the first place, which was how the tension between the happy man and the city could be understood, if not resolved.

¹⁵It stands to reason that the possibility of a true friendship based on virtue would not be a likely possibility open to the truly happy man, seeing as he himself will be an extreme rarity.

Aristotle's very next step is to take up this idea of superiority, only this time it is in relation to the soul (1240 a8).

Aristotle's answer to our present dilemmas seems to lie in two vague, but related discussions. The first discussion, concerned with the nature of self-love, asks if it is possible for a man to love himself (1240 a7). The goal of this question, according to Aristotle, is to determine whether or not it is possible for a man to be his own friend. When we examine the issue in depth, we see that, in some sense, it is both possible and impossible for a man to be his own friend: "On theoretical grounds, and in view of the accepted attributes of friends, self-love and love of others are in some respects opposed but in others manifestly similar. For in a way self-love is friendship by analogy, but not absolutely" (1240 a12-14). To be in a friendship, there must be a lover and an object of that love. To be a friend to oneself, then, requires that one has two parts; one that functions as the object of love, and another that possesses the affection for that object. Self-love, and thus friendship with oneself, can exist, if only on theoretical grounds, in so far as the soul has two separate parts that fulfill the necessary roles. And as we have seen through the course of our discussion, Aristotle has often engaged in the use of abstraction in order to examine the soul. The abstractions have generally taken the form of separating the soul into parts, parts which are generally related to one another. On purely theoretical grounds, then, it is entirely possible for the soul to love itself, so long as there is a separate part playing each necessary function; "for all these relations involve two separate factors; in so far then as the *soul* is in a manner two, these relations do in a manner belong to it, but in so far as the two are not separate, they do not" (1240 a19-22).

The soul, then, is capable of self-love, and thus, being its own friend. But in what way does this rather odd discussion clarify our current dilemma? When one takes a moment to reflect, what becomes clear is that Aristotle's earlier use of abstractions with regard to the soul always pointed toward a hierarchy. In particular, Aristotle differentiated between the commanding and the obeying parts of the soul when examining the natures of ethical, intellectual, and perfect virtue. The commanding part always played a superior role in the discussion, as it had to provide the guidance the obeying part was to follow. Being in the position of superiority, however, did not lead the commanding part away from the obeying part. The commanding part needed an obeying part to legitimate its existence, it was only superior in reference to something inferior that needed its superiority.¹⁶ By bringing the notion of self-love into the discussion, Aristotle forces us to reconsider the notion of superiority, a reconsideration that must also account for another aspect of soul as yet unexamined – kindly feelings.

The second discussion that holds part of the key to our present dilemma is one where Aristotle examines the notion of kindly feelings (1241 a1). Kindly feelings, according to Aristotle, are benevolent inclinations the soul has and can only have for another soul; “but it is the mark of one who feels kindly only to wish good, whereas it is the mark of the friend also to do the good that he wishes; for kindly feeling is the beginning of friendship, as every friend feels kindly, but not everyone who feels kindly is a friend” (1241 a11-14). Possession of kindly feelings is the beginning of all forms of friendship, it is that which permits the different forms of

¹⁶Consider also when Aristotle says “and wishing for the other to exist, and associating together, and sharing joy and grief, and being one *soul* and being unable even to live without one another but dying together - for this is the case with the single individual, and he associates with himself in this way, - all these characteristics then belong to the good man in relation to himself” (1240 b8-13).

friendship to occur between two souls.¹⁷ And kindly feelings must be present in the soul before friendship can exist if it is to be the beginning of any friendship.¹⁸ They must be elements within the soul, a reaction by the appetites and passions to some external stimulus. Kindly feelings, then, must be the responses of the soul to the pleasures and pains it experiences. Taken together with the previous discussion of self-love, this notion of kindly feelings seems to signal the way in which our previous dilemma will be solved.

Kindly feelings, because they are reactions of the soul to pleasures and pains, seem to fall under the sphere of ethical virtue. Aristotle admits this much when he says “it is clear that kindly feelings has to do with the friendship that is based on *ethics*” (1241 a9-10).¹⁹ Given what we have learned about self-love, with the addition of this ethical quality called kindly feelings, the answer as to how the perfectly virtuous man could be thought to need a friend now appears to come to light. On the one hand, it is true that the perfectly virtuous, and thus, truly happy man will himself have little need of a friend who will more than likely be his inferior. On the other hand, to be superior requires something to be superior over, some other half that completes the superior-inferior relationship. The perfectly virtuous man, however, because he is seemingly self-sufficient, should care little for this designation. The designation, then, is not the product of the perfect man, it can only be the product of the city. Thus, it is the city that designates the

¹⁷Kindly feelings are not to be confused with affection. The former is present as the basis for all friendships, the latter is only present in established friendships between equals.

¹⁸Following the tone of the overall discussion, it would seemingly be appropriate to call kindly feelings the ‘first principle’ of friendship.

¹⁹Rackman translates 02460< as ‘character,’ but given the present discussion and the need to remain faithful to Aristotle’s own words, I will render it as ‘ethics,’ as indicated in italics. Note also that friendliness was a quality of ethical character listed in the table of virtues in chapter two (1220 b39 - 1221 a12).

perfectly virtuous man as the superior man; it is the city which looks to the superior man for guidance.

Moreover, coupled with what Aristotle has said about superiority in relation to the soul, it seems as though the perfectly virtuous man also needs the city. This is, of course, curious indeed, seeing as the perfectly virtuous man should be self-sufficient. But when Aristotle's discussion of self-love is put together with the notion of kindly feelings, a very different story begins to emerge. The notion of self-love conveys the sense of a symbiotic relationship, one where two otherwise unrelated parts come together to form an organic whole. Left on its own, this discussion fails to help our dilemma, for the soul would be self-contained, and hence, self-sufficient. With the addition of kindly feelings in the soul, however, it becomes clear that every man possesses, to some degree, a benevolent attitude toward his fellow man. Kindly feelings seem to signify a sort of neediness on the part of the soul as it looks out at other souls with compassionate consideration. When added to the notion of self-loving, kindly feelings equate to a neediness on the part of the soul, one that even the perfectly virtuous man experiences.²⁰

It is to this end that we see how the original forms of friendship relate to one another, and how it is that even the friendship based in superiority can be considered a type of friendship. Even the perfectly virtuous man, precisely because he is still a man, has need of other men. The need for other human beings is a basic part of the soul, one that translates into a necessary element of the fundamental human condition.²¹ It seems clear, now, why Aristotle suggested at

²⁰And this seems to make sense, if for no other reason than the perfectly virtuous man must have someone with whom to practice his virtue.

²¹This also explains one of the reasons why the art of legislation must account for friendship; the origins of friendship are to be found in the character of the soul, a character that

the beginning of our examination of friendship that social relations were a necessary element of living well. Human nature requires that man lives with other men, to secure both his basic needs and the fine things necessary for the good life. The way in which he does these things takes different forms, all of which relate in some way back to the soul. It comes as no real surprise, then, that Aristotle's next step is to discuss the nature of the family (1241 b2). The family serves as a microcosm of our discussion of friendship, showing how both man's basic needs and his higher forms of social relationships can be fulfilled through a, if not the, basic social network: "all forms of constitution exist together in the household, . . . paternal authority being royal, the relationship of man and wife aristocratic, that of brothers a republic . . ." (1241 b27-32).²² The nature of the human condition, then, dictates that self-sufficiency can come only through social relationships.²³ And as self-sufficiency requires hierarchically differentiated goods, both human and otherwise, the receptacle of such goods is to be found first and foremost in the family. The family, then, exists as the basis for all social relationships. It serves as the paradigm from which all other human relationships take their bearing and derive their meaning. When the family is incapable of supplying all the things necessary for living well, other social relationships which derive their essence from this archetype step into the picture, such as the forms of friendship and the city.

must be properly habituated if a desired outcome is to be effected. Thus, to promote friendship, which we saw was the function of the art of legislation, requires paying proper attention to the nurturing of souls.

²²See also 1242 b1-2, where Aristotle says "hence in the household are first found the origins and springs of friendship, of political organization and of justice."

²³According to Harry Jaffa, "To possess happiness means to lack nothing desirable, to be self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency does not imply a solitary condition, but rather whatever a man needs to be happy: parents, children, friends, and fellow citizens." Jaffa, "Aristotle," p. 71.

In this way, then, our discussion has come full circle. We looked to friendship in an effort of better understand the city. The examination of friendship, in turn, ultimately led us to the family, which we saw serves as the foundation and paradigm for both friendship and the city. The nature of the city, then, cannot be understood without first recognizing what the nature of the family entails, and how it answers the needs of man as a social and political animal.²⁴ Having seemingly understood the nature of the city in the fullest sense, we should have also have come to some consensus about the dilemmas that were presented during the course of the discussion. And in some sense, we have, seeing how it is that even the perfectly virtuous man needs friends whom he will clearly surpass in terms of excellence. But in another sense, Aristotle's discussion still leave two things unanswered. First, Aristotle answered the dilemma of the perfectly virtuous man having need of inferior friends with recourse to the nature of man. In merely saying that all men, even the superior man, needs friends, Aristotle has not yet made it absolutely clear what these other men contribute to the truly happy man.²⁵ Second, and maybe most importantly, Aristotle's examination of friendship has not answered the question that first initiated this discussion, namely, how the tension between the truly happy man and the city (particularly the gods of the city) can be understood and resolved. With these questions in mind, let us rejoin this last section of Aristotle's discussion.

²⁴“For man is not only a political but also a house-holding animal, and does not, like the other animals, couple occasionally and with any chance female or male, but man is in a special way not a solitary but a gregarious animal, associating with the persons wit whom he has a natural kinship; accordingly there would be partnership, and justice of a sort, even if there were no state” (1242 a23-28).

²⁵Surely the answer to this must entail more than the need to procure the basic necessities of life, for if this were so, the perfectly virtuous man could exist quite contentedly in a community of beasts.

Seemingly taking his bearings from the ambiguities still left to be resolved, Aristotle proceeds to ask this question: “for one may raise the question whether if a person be self-sufficing in every respect he will have a friend, or whether on the contrary a friend is sought for in need, and the good man will be most self-sufficing. If the life that is combined with goodness is happy, what need would there be of a friend?” (1244 b1-6). Aristotle seems to recognize that his previous discussions, which included the notions of self-love and kindly feelings, are ultimately insufficient. For they do not tell us what it is that another man, presumably an inferior man, can provide to the superior man that the latter does not already have or would need. In framing the question as he does, Aristotle rules out the more pedestrian concerns of basic necessity; the question is one of higher goods, and it is not clear what the superior man can gain from civil society. The real question, then, is whether or not the superior man would need a friendship based on virtue, and if so, how that friendship would benefit him.²⁶

The answer to this question, according to Aristotle, is to be found in the activity of living itself (1244 b23-24). Aristotle tells us that “it is manifest that life is perception and knowledge in common. But perception and knowledge themselves are the thing most desirable for each individually” (1244 b25-28). The activity of life is one where the being who is alive is constantly engaged in a process of perceiving the external world and coming to some consensus with others about what those perceptions represent. This activity is much like the one we saw when Aristotle examined the nature of the mind and the intellectual virtues.²⁷ To live, then, is in

²⁶This leaves open the other problem we noted earlier, which was the rarity of having a, much less two or more, man of such a caliber.

²⁷The only difference is that the element of truth was explicitly added to the functions of the mind and the pursuit of wisdom, additions that are not necessarily present here. The

some way to be constantly learning. And because human living is at least partly defined by a social nature, the activity of life for man is to be learning about the things he has in common with other men. In one of the most curious and obscure passages in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle finally explains to us why it is that the perfectly virtuous man needs other men, even if they are inferior:

- since, then, we are not each of these things in ourselves but only by participating in these faculties in the process of perceiving or knowing (for when perceiving one becomes perceived by means of what one previously perceives, in the manner and in the respect in which one perceives it, and when knowing one becomes known) - hence owing to this one wishes always to live because one wishes always to know; and this is because one wishes to be oneself the object known (1245 a4-9).

The perfectly virtuous man needs other men, not only to practice virtue toward, but as a means whereby he can come to know and understand what virtue is. Moreover, the pursuit of wisdom, that way in which the mind bridges the gap between the scientific and calculating part, is a pursuit whose referent is other human beings. Aristotle's point in this rather cryptic passage seems to be that human beings live to learn, and that learning is necessarily centered around themselves. We, as human beings, perceive and know things ultimately because doing so teaches us about ourselves as the perceiver and knower. The superior man lives in a society of other men because through getting to know them he comes closer to fully knowing himself. This process, which when done correctly (i.e. truthfully), is the proper activity of the superior man: "to perceive and to know a friend, therefore, is necessarily in a manner to perceive and in a

importance of this distinction remains to be seen.

manner to know oneself” (1245 a35-38).²⁸ By coming to know other men, and in the best way when those others are good men, the happy man can understand the truth about the nature of his own soul, and what will make his soul happy.²⁹

In demonstrating how the superior man comes to know himself through his understanding of others, Aristotle has shown us why it is that even this extraordinary human being must keep the company of other men. The explanation also demonstrates why the true friendship, that based on virtue, was so important to our discussion. If the art of legislation, through its pronouncements, can promote this highest type of friendship, the superior man will have better men through whom he can come to know himself. But this discussion, while answering one of our dilemmas, still has one issue with which it must deal. The tension between the superior man and the city, a tension that now has taken on a new importance, has yet to be resolved. If it is the case that the superior man, in order to live the truly happy life, must seek to know himself through a knowledge of others, he must strive to attain the truth about the convictions they hold to be true. As we saw earlier, however, this set up a fundamental conflict between what informed the art of legislation – wisdom or the gods. The importance of this conflict is not to be understated. For as we approach the end of the treatise, the answer should

²⁸This, of course, implies a somewhat radical conclusion, namely, that all knowledge is referenced to the soul and pursued for the sake of the soul. It makes no sense, then, to speak of knowledge for its own sake; there can only be a pursuit of knowledge, and something is pursued only because it is desired. Thus, all knowledge is in a way self-knowledge, and the point of living, to say nothing of living well, is to know thyself.

²⁹It also suggest that the happy man, regardless of how enlightened he becomes, will never be fully happy. The activity of life seems to demand that the human soul can never be truly self-sufficient. Cf. 1244 b12-15.

somehow bring us to a final understanding on the overarching theme of this work, which is the question of the highest way of life and its relationship to happiness.

If we are to answer our remaining questions, Aristotle tells us that we must consider a new question: “But one may raise the question whether it is possible to use any given thing both for its natural purpose and otherwise” (1246 a1-3). This strange question, one whose relevance is not yet clear, forces us to consider the conflict between wisdom and the gods from the perspective of usage. Considering that we have already examined the natural purpose of wisdom, one would assume that we will need to examine if it can be used for some other purpose, as well as examining the gods from both perspectives. This assumption seems warranted, as Aristotle immediately moves to discuss his question in relation to knowledge; “and similarly with the use of *science*: one can use it truly, and one can use it wrongly . . .” (1246 a33-34). Science, the truth that follows from things that cannot be other than they are, can be used for, and according to, its natural purpose, or it can be used improperly and against its nature. The relevance of this becomes immediately evident, as Aristotle tells us that prudence is something that can be used either properly or incorrectly: “but since *prudence* is *science* and a form of truth, *prudence* also will produce the same effect as *science*, that is, it would be possible from *prudence* to act unwisely and to make the same mistakes as the unwise man does” (1246 a4-8).³⁰ The art of legislation, then, when it sets down the all too important pronouncements of the law, can do so in either a good or bad manner, rendering the laws themselves either good or bad.

³⁰It is necessary to remember that prudence has two meanings, the more comprehensive of which is the art of legislation and thus underscores this discussion’s relevance.

The possibility that the art of legislation can err when it lays down the laws implies that it is misinformed. Being a science, it requires information about the first things, the highest things upon which it is founded but about which it has no say. To say that the art of legislation can err is to say that it is misinformed by the higher sources of truth from which it takes its bearings: “in the case of the other forms of science, therefore, another higher form causes their diversions; but what knowledge causes the diversion of the actually highest of all?” (1246 b8-10). As the only two higher sources our discussion has been concerned with are wisdom and the gods, it seems clear that one of the two is not a real source of truth at all. Bad laws, and hence bad men, are the result of untruth, the application of ignorance to legislation. It seems as though the resolution of our conflict lies in determining which source is the truth, and which is false.

Aristotle’s procedure is to immediately take up the human side of the equation. What becomes clear very quickly is that if prudence is truly prudence, that is if it is properly informed by wisdom, it is incapable of error. “So that it is clear that men are *prudent* and good simultaneously, and that the states of character above described belong to a different person, and the Socratic dictum ‘nothing is mightier than *prudence*,’ is right” (1246 b33-34). If prudence is properly informed by wisdom, it does not err, and hence, it cannot make bad judgement. The art of legislation, if it looks to wisdom, will make good judgements, ones that will promote good souls, and thus, good men. Having excluded wisdom as a possible source of error, it stands to reason that the will of the gods must be the ultimate cause of bad laws and the tension between the superior man and the city. But in a curious move, Aristotle does not take up an examination of the nature of the gods and whether or not they can be the source of bad legislation. Instead,

Aristotle directs our attention to the notion of fortune, a notion we have not seen since the very beginning of the treatise. Our discussion, then, must somehow account for this notion of fortune if it is to properly reach its answers.

The first and last time we saw fortune, it appeared as a possibility for how one could acquire happiness.³¹ It presented a certain difficulty for the discussion at the time, though, for it was unclear to what degree a man could secure happiness through his own activities.³² Bringing fortune into the discussion at this point reintroduces this dilemma, one which Aristotle had not solved earlier. Aristotle tells us that fortune is an ambiguous term; it is clearly the cause of things, but in what way it can function as a cause is unclear (1247 b2-3). Fortune is not the same as nature or prudence; it has a nature all its own (1247 a9-31).³³ Aristotle's examination makes clear that fortune has a somewhat precarious nature; it seems to exist yet its essence cannot be identified. Once he has eliminated all the other possibilities, Aristotle suggests to us that fortune may ultimately be identified by a sort of luckiness; "yet someone may raise the question whether fortune is the cause of precisely this - our forming a desire for the right thing at the right time" (1248 a17-18). The practice of making the laws, following from this definition, would be an activity that flows from a desire to do something. Whether or not the resulting legislation is good or bad depends on if the desire is for the right thing at the right time. It seems entirely

³¹Cf. 1214 a26.

³²Precisely because what was necessary as conditions for the good life might lie largely outside of one's control.

³³Aristotle examination here also casts serious doubt that fortune can be the product of the gods.

reasonable, then, that the art of legislation could very easily err, for the likelihood that it will set down good laws seems entirely up to chance.³⁴

Yet this answer is inconclusive. It is not enough to say that fortune is a desire for the right thing at the right time; if fortune is the cause of all these things at the same time, there must be a reason that it is right. Aristotle suggests two ways in which fortune can be the cause of good legislation – it is either informed by the gods, or it is blind luck: “it is clear, then, that there are two kinds of good fortune – one divine, owing to which the fortunate man’s success is thought to be due to the aid of the God, . . . while the other is he who succeeds against his impulse” (1248 b3-8). By attending to the notion of fortune, Aristotle has brought the gods into the discussion, as the reason in which fortune may be the cause of good legislation. When the gods aid fortune, the desire will be for the right thing at the right time, and the art of legislation is properly informed. The resulting laws will be good. When the gods do not aid fortune, the desires will err, and the resulting legislation will be bad. The origin of bad legislation, then, seems to be the lack of divine providence, a necessity for creating good laws. But in characteristic fashion, this argument is seriously problematic. If good laws are predicated on only one form of fortune, the kind that is aided by the gods, then fortune itself really plays no role.³⁵ What is essential is whether or not the gods intervene with divine guidance. Aristotle’s argument does not appear to have answered our question. Moreover, given its problematic

³⁴This is particularly true because laws habituate desires. If the art of legislation, which is outside of the law, is ultimately based on luck and not wisdom, then the desires cannot have been properly habituated, and thus, would detract from the activity instead of benefitting it.

³⁵Although it could be said the second type of fortune, luck, would play a decisive role in the absence of divine providence.

nature, it is unclear what it has actually added. The tension between the superior man and the city, particularly the one whose laws are informed by the gods, is still present, and its resolution seems as unlikely as ever.

Philosophy

With the unresolved dilemma between the superior man and the city still present in the background, Aristotle redirects his discussion, suggesting that we must consider something else in light of our present difficulties. The answers to our questions seem to lie in a new line of examination, one that takes up the concept of nobility (1248 b11). Aristotle seemingly introduces this concept to clarify its relationship to virtue, a relationship that appears to carry some significance for our examination; “we have, then, previously spoken about each virtue in particular; and as we have distinguished their meaning separately, we must also describe in detail the virtue constituted from them, to which we now give the name of nobility” (1248 b8-11). Aristotle suggests that nobility is the fullest expression of virtue, a culmination of all the particular virtues under the rubric of one supreme, overarching virtue. This suggestion is, however, very curious indeed. For our discussion has already dealt with virtue, and more specifically, with the complete virtue, which we saw was justice. Based on this abrupt and rather cursory definition, Aristotle’s seems intent on bringing to light a distinction that exists between justice and nobility, one that will signal the long-awaited answers to our questions.

Aristotle proceeds as if he were going to give an account of how justice and nobility can be distinguished when he tells us that “being good and being noble are really different not only in their names but also in themselves” (1248 b17-19). This statement conveys what we previously suspected – nobility is strangely related but clearly differentiated from something we

have had experience with in the past. Instead of nobility being related to justice, however, Aristotle positions nobility opposite goodness, a term we have seen before, but not one that was used in relation to the whole of virtue. When we last encountered the notion of goodness, Aristotle was examining the nature of happiness, which he took to mean the activity of the perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue (1219 a35-39). Goodness, then, was a term used in relation to the perfect good, which Aristotle took to be happiness (1219 a28-29). In differentiating between nobility and goodness, however, Aristotle does not specify what he means by his use of the word ‘good.’³⁶ To understand how all of these terms relate, and how they contribute to the progression of our discussion, Aristotle’s examination requires a more clearly differentiated set of definitions.

Apparently aware of the ambiguity his discussion has caused, Aristotle proceeds to delineate exactly what the notion of nobility entails. According to Aristotle, “a man is noble because he possesses those good things that are fine for their own sake and because he is a doer of fine deeds even for their own sake; and the fine things are the virtues and the actions that arise from virtue” (1248 b34-38). The noble man, then, seems to differ subtly from the good man in that the good man practices virtue for the sake of something else.³⁷ Even though the activities of

³⁶When he used it in connection with happiness, goodness meant the perfect good, or highest human good. It is not clear whether or not this is what Aristotle means to imply with his current use of the word. Moreover, this use of the word reintroduces another ambiguity into our discussion that was previously left unresolved. Earlier Aristotle had equated goodness with happiness to signify that happiness was the absolute good. In doing so, however, he refused to say specifically what the absolute good was, particularly in reference to the supreme end of human action. Aristotle’s reintroduction of goodness here brings this ambiguity, along with its associated dilemmas, back into the context of the current discussion.

³⁷By good I mean only a man who, in distinction to the noble man, engages in virtuous activities not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else.

this good man may be good, he does not practice them for their own sake. And by contrasting the noble man with political examples, Aristotle suggests that the good man must be thought of in terms of the city (1248 b38). Aristotle's notion of the noble man seemingly accentuates the tension between what was once a conflict between the superior man and the laws of the city. But the noble man is not the superior man; ethical virtue, justice in the complete sense, was only one-half of the perfectly virtuous life led by the latter. The noble man seems to be the full embodiment of what we earlier saw was the political way of life. He stands apart from the city because he is the highest example of the city; the noble man's way of life assumes the first principles of the city and leads a way of life that holds those principles to be good in themselves.³⁸ Thus, Aristotle's introduction of the noble man to the discussion brings our overarching question of the highest way of life back into the perspective, a perspective which has now combined our two remaining questions.³⁹

As Aristotle now moves to close his treatise on ethics, this notion of the noble man seems to be the key to how both of our remaining questions will be resolved. From the perspective of the overarching question, the noble man reminds us immediately of the political way of life. We originally began this discussion by noting that there were really only two ways of life that could claim to be happy, and one was the man who engaged in virtuous actions for their own sake. The noble man, then, seems to be the full embodiment of the political way of life. And Aristotle

³⁸For a much more thorough examination of this subject, particularly as it pertains to the notion of the great-souled man, cf. Jacob Howland, "Aristotle's Great-Souled Man," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 64, Winter, 2002, pp. 27-56.

³⁹Although curious at first, it seems somewhat reasonable that Aristotle has done this, for it was him that originally intertwined the political and philosophical life without explaining what this entailed.

tells us that the noble man is perfectly good: “nobility then is perfect goodness” (1249 a18).

According to this, the noble man should be the happy man, for we have already seen that happiness is the perfect good (1219 a28-29). The political way of life, following from this argument, should be the highest way of life, and its activities should be the ones which subsume all other activities.

But this is not Aristotle’s argument, for after this pronouncement on nobility he immediately directs our attention back to the soul, particularly the hierarchical relationship of the soul’s parts: “it is proper, therefore, here as in other matters to live with reference to the ruling factor, and to the state and activity of the ruling factor, . . . And since man consists by nature of a ruling part and a subject part, and each would properly live with reference to the ruling principle within him” (1249 b7-12). The highest way of life, according to Aristotle, is to have one’s soul properly ordered, which is to say living according to the ruling principle, and to contemplate the nature of God:

Therefore whatever mode of choosing and of acquiring things good by nature - whether goods of body or wealth or friends or the other goods - will best promote the contemplation of God, that is the best mode, and that standard is the finest (1249 b17-19)

The dilemma that has hung in the background of this entire examination is all at once brought front and center and treated in a rather systematic fashion, providing what appears to be a clear cut answer. If anything is to be taken from this entire examination, however, it is that Aristotle has rarely given us a clear and systematic answer to our questions. Here, too, seems to be another such case, as the answer, once applied to our remaining questions, is less than a perfect fit. On the one hand, the noble man, the embodiment of the political way of life, is insufficient as the highest way of life. Even though his way of life is perfectly good, it is not the happiest. It

seems as though he is not truly happy because he does not contemplate God, the most exalted activity possible. But this is problematic as well, for we have seen that others who engage in this sort of activity are not truly happy either. Twice Aristotle has told us that Anaxagoras's way of life is not the highest way of life, for his wisdom is useless in terms of human happiness.⁴⁰ At first glance, then, Aristotle's answer seems hypocritical, for he appears to advocate something that he has previously dismissed. On a moment's reflection, however, Aristotle's entire project appears to have come to a completely consistent conclusion.

Aristotle earlier refused to explain why he rejected the political way of life from the competition for the highest way of life. By subsequently redirecting the discussion to the soul, particularly its proper ordering, instead of toward a fuller account of nobility, Aristotle suggested that the political way of life could not be the highest way of life because it lacked self-sufficiency. We have seen that only the perfectly virtuous life can make a claim to be self-sufficient because it and only it actualizes the potential of both the commanding and obeying parts of the soul. The political way of life only maximizes the obeying part of the soul, it lacks the capacity to actualize the commanding part.⁴¹ By contrast, Anaxagoras's way of life, that of pure contemplation, is equally insufficient, for it is equally as impotent with regard to the obeying part of the soul. In light of this, then, how is Aristotle's answer to be gauged? How does his definition of the highest, happiest way of life at the end of the treatise differ from Anaxagoras's way of life while somehow achieving what the political way of life could not?

⁴⁰ Cf. 1216 a13-14 and 1142 b4-9.

⁴¹ This was exactly why our discussion of justice pointed toward the subsequent discussion of intellectual virtue.

The answer to this lies in a curious statement that Aristotle made preceding his pronouncement on the highest way of life. Aristotle tells us that “God is not a ruler in the sense of issuing commands, but is the end as a means to which *prudence* gives commands . . . since clearly God in need of nothing” (1249 b14-17). In this peculiar statement lies the answer to all of our questions. According to Aristotle, God is that which informs prudence, the truth in which all things are to be found.⁴² And this seems to fit with what we have seen before, as prudence, in both its individual aspect and as the art of legislation, looked to some higher form of authority to inform the choices it makes. When we examined the intellectual virtues as a whole, we saw that prudence (in the individual sense) and the art of legislation were both informed by wisdom – the truth about the nature of all things – particularly as they related to the nature of the soul. And because we can rule out attributing a providential nature to God, it seems that God and wisdom must be one and the same.⁴³

Thus, Aristotle was able to reject both Anaxagoras and the political way of life as being incomplete: the former having no concern for the desires, and the latter incapable of accounting for the mind. This leaves only one alternative remaining, and it is the one that Aristotle has been hinting at throughout this entire examination. Only the properly philosophical life, which accounts for both prudence and contemplation, can be self-sufficient; only the activities of the

⁴²It seems reasonable to assume that God is the absolute good and the supreme end of all human actions.

⁴³At least in so far as they are concerned about the same thing. I mean by this that wisdom was a function of the mind, whereby it came to an understanding about the truth of things and what necessarily followed from that truth. In this way God would actually be the subject with which the activity of wisdom was concerned.

properly philosophical life can subsume all other activities.⁴⁴ The philosophical way of life corrects the political way of life by taking into account the virtues of the desires while actualizing the virtues of the mind.⁴⁵ Conversely, Anaxagoras is corrected by forcing the activity of his way of life to account for the things of a distinctly human nature.⁴⁶ It is in this way, then, that Aristotle has answered the overarching question that defined the nature of the *Eudemian Ethics*.⁴⁷

But our discussion has one issue left with which it must deal, one that leaves the ultimate resolution of the treatise in question. With the treatise now completed, what remains unresolved is the tension that exists between the superior man and the city. The superior man, he who leads

⁴⁴This is possible, of course, because the nature of all things lies within the nature of God.

⁴⁵This accounts for the basis of the ethical virtues, answering why one acts virtuously and what constitutes a virtue. The implication of this, however, is that the political way of life suffers another shortcoming, namely, that it makes little sense to say a virtuous activity is good in itself.

⁴⁶Leo Strauss, commenting on Alfarabi's reading of Plato (and hence Aristotle), says "One must go a step further and say, using the language of an ancient, that $\Phi\lambda\omega\varsigma$ and $\Phi\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, or philosophy (as quest for the truth about the whole) and self-knowledge (as realization of the need of that truth as well as of the difficulties obstructing its discovery and communication) cannot be separated from each other. This means, considering the relation of the questions 'why philosophy?' and 'what is the right way of life?' that one cannot become a philosopher without becoming engaged in 'the scientific investigation concerning justice and the virtues'." Leo Strauss, "Farabi's Plato," In *Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, (New York: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1945), 366.

⁴⁷Note here that Farabi, when speaking about wisdom and philosophy, says "The Greeks who possessed this science used to call it 'unqualified' wisdom and the highest wisdom. They called the acquisition of it science, and the scientific state of mind philosophy (by which they meant the quest and the love for the highest wisdom). They called the one who acquires it philosopher (meaning the one who loves and is in quest of the highest wisdom). They held that potentially it subsumes all the virtues. They called it the science of sciences, the mother of sciences, the wisdom of wisdoms, and the art of arts (they meant the art that makes use of all the arts, the virtue that makes use of all the virtues, and the wisdom that makes use of all the wisdoms)." Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 43.

the truly philosophical life, has been seen to be the highest and happiest man, precisely because he actualizes the full potential of this nature. This is, of course, problematic, for we have seen that this actualization requires accounting for man's social nature, particularly in regards to friendship.⁴⁸ And as friendship, via the city, is ultimately the product, not of wisdom, but of either fortune as luck or fortune with the aid of the gods, the tension seems capable of preventing the superior man from ever being fully happy.⁴⁹ Aristotle has already given us a hint as to how this tension can be understood. Previously he told us that God is the source of truth, and serves as the object and end of the life of philosophy. In telling us this, however, Aristotle made it clear that his conception of God differs markedly from most conceptions of God. Aristotle's God is not a being so to speak. It is the source of all things, that in which the nature of all things is to be found. And as the source of all being, it must stand beyond being in a higher realm of existence. God, for Aristotle, is the truth and source of all things, it is the comprehensive account of all natures – it is the whole of nature. As the whole of nature, God has no will, and thus, divine

⁴⁸Remember that is in getting to know his friends, especially his good friends, that the superior man better understands himself. It can be said, following from this, that friendship is the way in which contemplating God reveals the truth about both the nature of man in general and one's own nature in particular.

⁴⁹This is so because of two reasons. First, ethical virtue, and hence perfect virtue as a whole, requires the laws that habituate the appetites and passions to respond correctly to pleasure and pain be correct and good. This would require that the laws be informed by wisdom, which we saw was highly unlikely, if not impossible. Second, it hard to see how a man could be considered truly happy when he is in constant tension with other men.

providence is an impossibility (1249 b14-15).⁵⁰ This hint, when applied to our current dilemma, shows us that the notion of fortune presented earlier was problematic for a very good reason.

The laws of the city were shown to be the product of one of two things; fortune as luck or fortune with the aid of the gods. Having now seen what Aristotle deems to be the nature of God, it is impossible that the latter alternative be Aristotle's true teaching. If God has no will, and hence divine providence is an impossibility, then the laws of the city cannot be the product of God. The laws of the city must ultimately be the product of a certain form of luck, one that can be either right or wrong. What the city ultimately has as its first principles of actions, that which the citizens hold to be true with regard to how they should act, appears to be merely a matter of chance. Whether or not the laws are good is entirely arbitrary from the perspective of informed legislation; if fortune smiles on a city and gives it good laws, it is entirely because that city is lucky. But what does this say about our examination? If the laws of the city are arbitrarily good or bad, how can the superior man of perfect virtue ever come to possess ethical virtue, much less be happy while in constant tension with the practices of his fellow citizens?

These questions, then, mark what seems to be the final teaching of the *Eudemian Ethics*. Aristotle implies with this ever-present tension that the highest and happiest way of life is not a true possibility.⁵¹ The superior man would have a hard time becoming superior without the aid of good laws that promoted the development of his ethical character. And even if this occurred,

⁵⁰It is hard to attribute a will to something that is not a being, as will is an attribute of a soul, which is possessed by a being. A soul, then, because it is part of a being, is incomplete in relation to the whole of being. Thus, God cannot have a soul, because in him lies the whole of being, and hence, the whole of souls.

⁵¹One could say that it is within the realm of the possible, but its likelihood is too remote to constitute a real objective.

he would still be in tension with his fellow citizens over the nature of proper conduct as it is embodied in the law.⁵² Aristotle, then, has seemingly gone through a long and rigorous examination to show us a theoretical impossibility. This appears rather absurd at first, but when one stops to think for a moment, it becomes clear that Aristotle has given us exactly what we sought. The *Eudemian Ethics* opened with a discussion of happiness and the good life. The only way that one can come to understand the relationship between the two is to see what the nature of each is, and in what manifestation does their fullest expression lie. Thus, to truly understand the relationship between happiness and the good life, we had to first understand what both true happiness and the good life were, and then how they related to one another. The perfect life, the activity of the superior man in accordance with perfect goodness and virtue, had to be understood if we were to appreciate how the discussion could inform us. Aristotle's treatise, then, has really functioned as a pedagogical dialogue; we now understand that if we wish to live as well as is possible for us, we must gauge our actions by the standard of the perfectly virtuous man while keeping in mind the tension that exists with the city. In this way, then, living well, at least in so far as it is an option open to capable men, is an activity that must constantly take into account the highest things, while being ever-mindful of what one has with which he can work.

⁵²One need only think of the plight of Socrates, or Aristotle's own experiences following the death of Alexander, for an example of this tension.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

The ending of the *Eudemian Ethics* brings a kind of bittersweet resolution to our examination. The highest way of life for man, that which fully maximizes the potential of his nature, is more than likely a theoretical construct, one never to be realized in the realm of political reality. At first, this realization dampens the mood of the treatise, as the pursuit of true happiness seems to be something of a Sisyphean labor. After a moment's reflection, though, this realization appears necessary, for the activity of living well must always be a pursuit of something, and what that something is can only be known in light of the best. Living well and happiness, then, are ends in themselves, objectives to be brought about through the choices we make and the material with which we have to work. Informed decisions about these matters are then necessary; in fact, one can venture so far as to say they are vitally necessary, and can be made only in light of the remotest of possibilities.

Having thus ended our examination of the *Eudemian Ethics*, we must now return to the beginning of this project in an attempt to apply what we have learned to the questions we set out to answer. This project took as its starting point three separate but related questions, the answers to which we hoped would both help us evaluate the *Eudemian Ethics* as a whole, particularly in relation to the ethical corpus and traditional scholarship, and assess its relevance to contemporary moral inquiry. First we asked if the *Eudemian Ethics* presents a concise and coherent argument from which an understanding of Aristotle's thoughts on ethics can be discerned? In response to this question, the answer must almost certainly be an emphatic yes. Aristotle's discussion proceeds in an incremental manner that he himself carefully orchestrates, forcing us to focus on certain things before moving on to others. This seems to have been done,

from Aristotle's point of view, in order to force us to view the structured and often hierarchical relationships between certain things. For example, we saw that the notion of ethical virtue, if it was to be properly understood, had to be viewed in light of justice, particularly its two aspects. And justice itself, in turn, had to be viewed in light of intellectual virtue, which itself possesses many features crucial to the discussion. From this perspective, the *Eudemian Ethics* is not only concise and coherent, but a masterful pedagogical dialogue that takes the form of a treatise. In this way, then, the assumptions of traditional scholarship seem baseless, as the *Eudemian Ethics* more than holds up to the scrutiny of critical analysis and probing.

Our second question asked what the main theme of the *Eudemian Ethics* was, and how the text developed an argument to elucidate that theme. The *Eudemian Ethics*, from the very beginning, made it clear that the theme of its discussion was the uniquely related notions of happiness and living well. The text developed that theme by making clear how the relationship between those two notions could be understood. We eventually saw that happiness was the activity of living well, meaning the life of perfect virtue in accordance with perfect goodness. And the genius of the treatise was to offer this teaching, not necessarily as a possibility, but as a standard upon which the compromises of life could be based. To this end, the *Eudemian Ethics* absolutely develops any and every aspect of the theme, for to be truly informative is to make clear both the highest standards, and the nature of the compromises that must be made in light of those standards.

The third and final question that defined the intent of this project was to ascertain how the argument of the *Eudemian Ethics* was influenced by two important concepts: politics and philosophy. Aristotle's discussion made it clear that, in terms of the highest way of life, politics

and philosophy are intimately related to one another. In some ways they represent the greatest possibilities to be found in different aspects of a single soul; in others ways they represent the tension that forces man to compromise how he must choose to live. The overall teaching of the treatise, then, is unintelligible, both pragmatically and philosophically, without the notions of politics and philosophy. If nothing else is to be garnered from the *Eudemian Ethics*'s treatment of these concepts, it is that no treatment of ethics is intelligible without an adequate account of politics and philosophy.

Thus, this project has reached its conclusion, having answered in the affirmative all the questions it posed to the treatise. Moreover, it has made a decent case that the *Eudemian Ethics*, at the least, deserves to be treated as a fully mature work on its own terms. The whole of Aristotle's ethical thought can no longer be assumed to be confined to one work with any certainty. The contemporary reader, the man or woman who wishes to rediscover the language of ancient moral inquiry, must be willing to come to terms with at least two of Aristotle's ethical works if he or she is to fully appreciate the totality of the great master's thoughts. It is in light of this rediscovery, then, that this project has sought to make a positive contribution.

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APPENDIX

The list of the forty-two emotions beginning at 1220 b39

Irascibility	Spiritlessness	Gentleness
Rashness	Cowardice	Courage
Shamelessness	Diffidence	Modesty
Profligacy	Insensitiveness	Temperance
Envy	(nameless)	Righteous Indignation
Profit	Loss	The Just
Prodigality	Meanness	Liberality
Boastfulness	Self-depreciation	Sincerity
Flattery	Surliness	Friendliness
Subservience	Stubbornness	Dignity
Luxuriousness	Endurance	Hardiness
Vanity	Smallness of Spirit	Greatness of Spirit
Extravagance	Shabbiness	Magnificence
Rascality	Simpleness	Wisdom (<i>Prudence</i>)*

* - indicates addition or alternate rendering to Rackman's translation

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